



Alsace & Lorraine

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- » Brasserie Excelsior (p337)

Best Places to Stay

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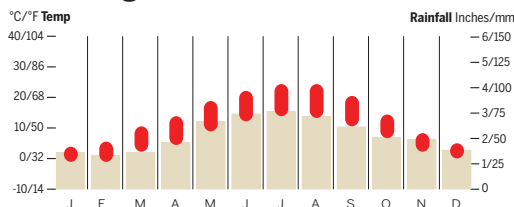
Why Go?

Alsace is a one-off cultural hybrid. With its Germanic dialect and French sense of fashion, love of foie gras and *choucroute* (sauerkraut), fine wine *and* beer, this distinctive region often leaves you wondering quite where you are. Where are you? Why, in the land of living fairy tales of course, where vineyards fade into watercolour distance, hilltop castles send spirits soaring higher than the region's emblematic storks and half-timbered villages look fresh-minted for a Disney film set. If the locals' way with geraniums and pastels seems impossibly twee, take heart – beneath that oh-so-traditional exterior, your average Alsatian is an eccentric just itching to get out.

Lorraine has high culture and effortless grace thanks to its historic roll-call of dukes and art nouveau pioneers, who had an eye for grand designs and good living. Its blessedly underrated cities, cathedrals and art collections leave first-timers spellbound, while its WWI battlefields render visitors speechless time and again with their painful beauty.

When to Go

Strasbourg



July Strasbourg fireworks, street fun and cathedral illuminations at Les Festiv'Étés.

September Toast the grape harvest with new wine and autumn colour on the Route des Vins.

December Mulled wine, gingerbread and carols galore at Christmas markets throughout Alsace.

BATTLEFIELDS

Take a guided walk of the WWI battlefields with Jean-Paul de Vrès and be touched by the real-life stories of soldiers at Romagne '14-'18 (p348) near Verdun.

Grand Designs

- » Strasbourg's sublimely Gothic Cathédrale Notre-Dame (p303)
- » The space-age curves of gleaming white Centre Pompidou-Metz (p339)
- » Nancy's ever-so-grand neoclassical place Stanislas (p335)
- » The light fantastic Cathédrale St-Étienne (p339) in Metz
- » Vauban's star-shaped citadel (p326) in Neuf-Brisach

Planning Your Trip

- » Book your accommodation at <http://hotels.lonelyplanet.com>
- » Arrange tastings at wineries (p316), route des Vins d'Alsace cycling tours (p328) and tours of Strasbourg's breweries (p309)
- » Plan how you're going to get around the region (p333)

Resources

- » Northern Alsace Tourism (www.tourisme67.com)
- » Southern Alsace Tourism (www.tourisme68.com)
- » Lorraine Tourism (www.tourism-lorraine.com)

Glorious Food & Wine

With its chocolate-box villages and lusciously green vineyards, Alsace doesn't only *look* good enough to eat. The Alsations dine with French finesse and drink with German gusto, and every corner leads to mouth-watering surprises: shops doing a brisk trade in homemade foie gras, gingerbread and macaroons; entire regions dedicated to cheese; mile upon glorious mile of country lanes given over to the life-sweetening pleasures of wine and chocolate. So take the lead of locals: go forth and indulge!

Kick-start your gourmet adventure by visiting www.tourisme-alsace.com and <http://gastronomie.vins.tourisme-alsace.com> (in French). Local tourist boards can help you fine-tune your visit, be it a stay on a working dairy farm, a chocolate-tasting road trip or a *dégustation* (tasting) of *grand cru* wines.

FOODIE TRAILS

No matter whether you're planning to get behind the wheel for a morning or pedal leisurely through the vineyards for a week, the picture-book Route des Vins d'Alsace (Alsace Wine Route; p316) is a must. Swing-ing 170km from Marlenheim to Thann, the road is like a 'greatest hits' of Alsace, with its pastoral views, welcoming caves (wine cellars) and half-timbered villages. Go to www.alsace-route-des-vins.com to start planning.

Fancy some cheese to go with that wine? Head to Munster (p329) to taste the pungent, creamy *fromage* first made by Benedictine monks. The tourist office (www.la-vallee-de-munster.com) can arrange farm-stays and dairy tours.

Having polished off the cheese and wine, it would be rude not to pass the chocolates, not to mention the gingerbread and macarons, on the Route du Chocolat et des Douceurs d'Alsace (p314), 200km of mmmm...

Grape & Grain

- » Vignoble Klur (p322) is a friendly, family-run winery producing excellent organic wines. Linger for guided vineyard walks, Alsatian cookery classes and creative workshops.
- » Brasseries Heineken (p310) refreshes with informative, free two-hour tours of its brewery. Phone ahead for reservations.
- » Cave de Ribeauvillé (p320), France's oldest winegrowers' cooperative, opens its doors for tastings of all seven varieties of Alsatian wine.
- » Brasseries Kronenbourg (p310) sells 700 million litres of beer a year in France. Phone ahead for tours that include a, hic..., tasting.
- » Cave des Hospices de Strasbourg (p310), deep below Strasbourg's hospital, has been curing all ills with its prized vintages since the 14th century.

ALSACE

History

French influence in Alsace began during the Wars of Religion (1562–98) and increased during the Thirty Years War (1618–48). Most of the region was attached to France in 1648 under the Treaty of Westphalia.

By the time of the French Revolution, Alsations felt more connected to France than to Germany, but time did little to dampen Germany's appetite for the region they called *Elsass*. When the Franco-Prussian War ended in 1871, an embittered France was forced to cede Alsace to the Kaiser. The region was returned to France following Germany's defeat in WWI but it was re-annexed by Nazi Germany in 1940.

After WWII Alsace was once again returned to France. Intra-Asatian tensions ran high, however, as 140,000 Alsations – as annexed citizens of the Third Reich – had been conscripted into Hitler's armies. These conscripts were known as the 'Malgré-Nous' (literally 'despite ourselves') because the majority went to war against their will. To make Alsace a symbol of hope for future Franco-German (and pan-European) cooperation, Strasbourg was chosen as the seat of the Council of Europe (in 1949) and, later, of the European Parliament.

The **Mémorial de l'Alsace-Moselle** (www.memorial-alsace-moselle.org, in French & German; adult/child €10/7; ☀10am–6.30pm Tue–Sun), 50km southwest of Strasbourg in Schirmeck, takes an unblinking but reconciliatory look at the region's traumatic modern history, which saw residents change nationality four times in 75 years.

Getting There & Around

Alsace is *almost* in central Europe. It's situated 456km east of Paris, midway between Calais and Prague (about 630km from each), and is slightly closer to Berlin (801km) than to Marseille (814km).

BICYCLE Alsace is interwoven with bike trails (see p328). Bicycles can be taken on virtually all regional TER trains (but not SNCF buses).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE From Strasbourg, the A4 heads northwest towards Metz and Paris, while from Mulhouse the A36 goes southwest towards the Jura and Dijon. The Massif des Vosges gets snowy in winter so winter tyres and/or chains may be required.

TRAIN If you're aged 12 to 25, you can get 50% off on all regional rail travel with an annual Tonus Alsace pass (€15). The great-value Réflexe Alsace ticket, available for those aged 26 and

over, costs €25 for a year and gets you a 30% discount on travel on weekdays and a huge 70% reduction at weekends.

Strasbourg

POP 276,000

Strasbourg is the perfect overture to all that is idiosyncratic about Alsace – walking a fine tightrope between France and Germany, a medieval past and a progressive future, it pulls off its act in inimitable Alsatian style.

Tear your gaze away from that mesmerising Gothic cathedral for just a minute and you'll be roaming the old town's twisting alleys lined with crooked half-timbered houses à la Grimm; feasting in the cosiest of *winstubs* (Alsatian taverns) by the canalside in Petite France; and marvelling at how a city that does Christmas markets and gingerbread so well can also be home to the glittering EU Quarter and France's second-largest student population. But that's Strasbourg for you: all the sweeter for its contradictions and cross-cultural quirks.

History

Founded by the Merovingians in the 5th century, Strasbourg was long an important trade centre on the route between northern Europe and the Mediterranean. The city was ruled by democratic guilds in medieval times, when the cathedral, once the highest in Christendom, was built between 1015 and 1439. Johannes Gutenberg developed the first printing press with moveable type here in 1450.

Strasbourg witnessed the Reformation in the 16th century, the founding of its university in 1567 and the debut of *La Marseillaise* (the French national anthem) in 1792. Over ensuing centuries, the city ping-ponged between France and Germany. Strasbourg's prominent place in Europe's heart was confirmed when it became the seat of the Council of Europe in 1949 and of the European Parliament in 1992.

Sights

Cathédrale Notre-Dame

CATHEDRAL

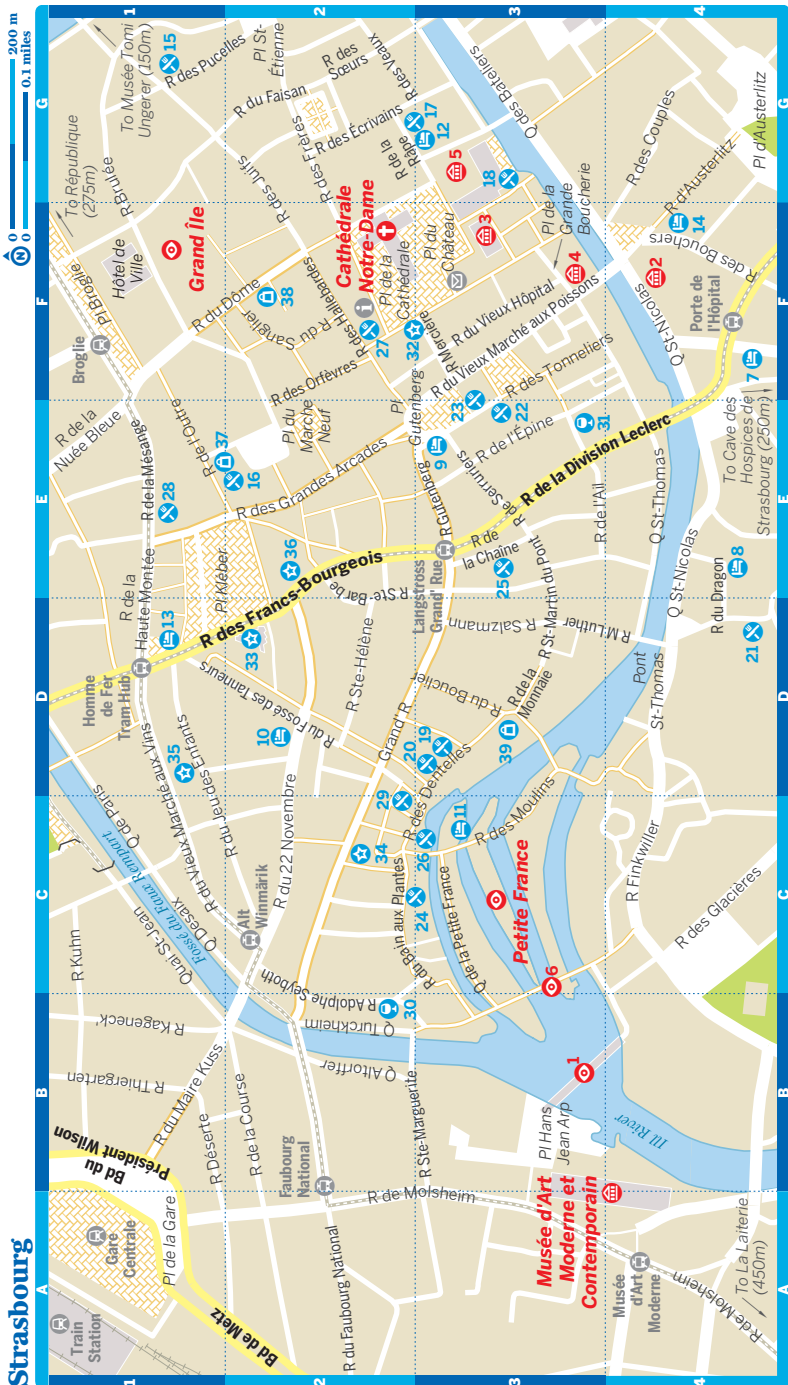
(place de la Cathédrale; ☀7am–7pm; 🗺Lang-stross) Victor Hugo declared it a 'gigantic and delicate marvel', Goethe professed that its 'loftiness is linked to its beauty' and, no matter the angle or time of day, you too will be captivated by Strasbourg's centrepiece Gothic cathedral. At once immense and

Alsace & Lorraine Highlights

- 1 Saunter around canal-laced **Petite Venise** (p323) as Colmar starts to twinkle
- 2 Get a gargoyle's-eye view of Strasbourg from the platform of Gothic **Cathédrale Notre-Dame** (p303)
- 3 Survey the cross-studded **Verdun Battlefields** (p346) in the early morning silence
- 4 Be amazed by art nouveau and rococo grace in **Nancy** (p333)
- 5 Gaze across the vines from the giddy heights of medieval **Château du Haut Kœnigsbourg** (p320)
- 6 Wish for luck (or lots of babies!) spotting storks in **Hunawihr** (p321)
- 7 Immerse yourself in modern art at the architecturally innovative **Centre Pompidou-Metz** (p339)
- 8 Tiptoe through the enchanting forests of the misty **Vosges** (p329) mountains
- 9 Go dairy-hopping in the verdant **Vallée de Munster** (p329)
- 10 Save the storybook lanes of half-timbered **Riquewihr** (p321) until dusk







intricate, the cathedral is a riot of filigree stonework and flying buttresses, leering gargoyles and lacy spires.

The west facade, most impressive if approached from rue Mercière, was completed in 1284, but the 142m spire – the tallest of its time – was not in place until 1439; its southern companion was never built.

On a sunny day, the 12th- to 14th-century **stained-glass windows** – especially the rose window over the western portal – shine like jewels. To appreciate the cathedral in peace, visit in the early evening when the crowds have thinned and stay to see its facade glow gold at dusk.

The 30m-high Gothic-meets-Renaissance **astronomical clock** (adult/child €2/free; ⌚ tickets sold from 11.50am) strikes solar noon at 12.30pm with a parade of carved wooden figures portraying the different stages of life and Jesus with his apostles.

A spiral staircase twists up to the 66m-high **platform** (adult/child €4.70/2.30; ⌚ 9am-7.15pm) above the facade, from which the

tower and its Gothic openwork spire soar another 76m. As Hugo put it: 'From the belfry, the view is wonderful. Strasbourg lays at your feet, the old city of tiled triangular roof tops and gable windows, interrupted by towers and churches as picturesque as those of any city in Flanders.'

Grande Île

HISTORIC QUARTER

(🏠 Langstross) History seeps through winding lanes dotted with candy-coloured half-timbered houses and vibrant café-rimmed squares in the Unesco World Heritage site of Grande Île, a place made for aimless ambling. These ancient streets cower beneath the soaring magnificence of the cathedral and its sidekick, the gingerbread 15th-century **Maison Kammerzell** (rue des Hallebardes), with its ornate carvings and leaded windows. The alleys are at their most atmospheric when lantern-lit at night.

Petite France

HISTORIC QUARTER

(🏠 Alt Winmàrik) Criss-crossed by narrow lanes, canals and locks, impossibly pretty

Strasbourg

📍 Top Sights

Cathédrale Notre-Dame.....	F2
Grand Île	F1
Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain	A4
Petite France	C3

📍 Sights

1 Barrage Vauban.....	B3
Maison Kammerzell..... (see 27)	
2 Musée Alsacien.....	F4
3 Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame	F3
4 Musée Historique	F3
5 Palais Rohan	G3
6 Ponts Couvert.....	C3

🛏 Sleeping

7 Hôtel Au Cerf d'Or	F4
8 Hôtel du Dragon.....	E4
9 Hôtel Gutenberg	E3
10 Hôtel Hannong.....	D2
11 Hôtel Régent Petite France.....	C3
12 Hôtel Suisse	G3
13 Le Kléber Hôtel	D1
14 Romantik Hôtel Beaucour	F4

🍴 Eating

15 Au Coin des Pucelles.....	G1
16 Au Crocodile	E2
17 Bistrot et Chocolat	G2

18 Farmers' Market.....	G3
19 L'Appart à Tartes.....	D3
20 La Cambuse	D3
21 La Choucrouterie	D4
22 La Cloche à Fromage	E3
23 La Cloche à Fromage Boutique.....	F3
24 La Tinta	C3
25 L'Assiette du Vin	E3
26 Maison des Tanneurs	C3
27 Maison Kammerzell	F2
28 Monoprix.....	E1
29 Poêles de Carottes.....	C2

🍷 Drinking

30 Académie de la Bière	B2
31 Bar Exils	E3
Jeannette et les Cycleux..... (see 22)	

🎮 Entertainment

32 Boutique Culture.....	F2
33 Fnac Billeterie.....	D2
34 L'Artichaut.....	C2
Le Seven	(see 22)
35 Cinéma Star.....	D1
36 Odysée	E2

🛍 Shopping

37 Christian.....	E1
38 Coco LM.....	F2
39 Mireille Oster	D3

Petite France is where craftsmen plied their trades in the Middle Ages. The half-timbered houses, sprouting veritable thickets of scarlet geraniums in summer, and the riverside parks attract the masses, but the area still manages to retain its Alsatian atmosphere and charm, especially in the early morning and late evening.

Drink in views of the River Ill and the mighty 17th-century **Barrage Vauban** (Vauban Dam), undergoing renovation at the time of writing, from the much-photographed **Ponts Couverts** (Covered Bridges) and their trio of 13th-century towers.

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain

ART MUSEUM

(place Hans Jean Arp; adult/child €6/free; ☉noon-7pm Tue, Wed & Fri, noon-9pm Thu, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☑Musée d'Art Moderne) This striking glass-and-steel cube showcases an outstanding collection of fine art, graphic art and photography. Kandinsky, Picasso, Magritte and Monet canvases hang out alongside curvaceous works by Strasbourg-born abstract artist Hans Jean Arp. Find details on temporary exhibitions on the website.

Don't leave without enjoying a drink at the glass-fronted **Art Café** (☉Tue-Sun), graced by bold frescoes by Japanese artist Aki Kuroda. The terrace commands terrific views of the River Ill and Petite France.

Palais Rohan

HISTORIC RESIDENCE

(2 place du Château; adult/child €5/free; ☉noon-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☑Langstross) Hailed a 'Versailles in

miniature', this opulent 18th-century residence was built for the city's princely bishops, and Louis XV and Marie-Antoinette once slept here.

The basement **Musée Archéologique** takes you from the Palaeolithic period to AD 800. On the ground floor is the **Musée des Arts Décoratifs**, where rooms adorned with Hannong ceramics and gleaming silverware evoke the lavish lifestyle of the nobility in the 18th century. On the 1st floor, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts'** collection of 14th- to 19th-century art reveals El Greco, Botticelli and Flemish Primitive works.

Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame

ECCLESIASTICAL MUSEUM

(3 place du Château; adult/child €4/free; ☉noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☑Langstross) Occupying a cluster of sublime 14th- and 16th-century buildings, this museum harbours one of Europe's premier collections of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance sculptures (including many originals from the cathedral), plus 15th-century paintings and stained glass. *Christ de Wissembourg* (c 1060; room two) is the oldest work of stained glass in France.

Hollywood gore seems tame compared to the tortures back when Hell really was hell. Sure to scare you into a life of chastity is *Les Amants Trépassés* (the Deceased Lovers; room 23), painted in 1470, showing a grotesque couple being punished for their illicit lust: both of their entrails are being devoured by dragon-headed snakes.

Musée Historique

HISTORY MUSEUM

(2 rue du Vieux Marché aux Poissons; adult/child €5/free; ☉noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☑Langstross) Trace Strasbourg's history from its beginnings as a Roman military camp called Argentoratum at this engaging museum housed in a 16th-century slaughterhouse. Highlights include a famous painting of the first-ever performance of *La Marseillaise*, France's stirring national anthem, which – despite its name – was written in Strasbourg in 1792; a 1:600-scale model of the city, created in the 1720s to help Louis XV visualise the city's fortifications; and a Gutenberg Bible from 1485. Kids can try on medieval-style knights' helmets and touch ancient pots and 18th-century cannons.

Musée Alsacien

FOLK MUSEUM

(23 quai St-Nicolas; adult/child €5/free; ☉noon-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun;



STRASBOURG SAVER

Save on culture with a good-value **Pass des Musées** (1-day/3-day/annual €8/10/25), covering admission to all of Strasbourg's museums, including temporary exhibitions.

The **Strasbourg Pass** (adult/child €12.50/6), a coupon book valid for three consecutive days, includes a visit to one museum, access to the cathedral platform, half a day's bicycle rental and a boat tour, plus hefty discounts on other tours and attractions.

Admission to all of Strasbourg's **museums** (www.musees-strasbourg.org) and the cathedral's platform is free on the first Sunday of the month.

☞ **Porte de l'Hôpital**) Spread across three typical houses from the 1500s and 1600s, this museum affords a fascinating glimpse into Alsatian life over the centuries. Kitchen equipment, children's toys, colourful furniture and even a tiny 18th-century synagogue are on display in the museum's two dozen rooms.

Musée Tomi Ungerer MUSEUM

(2 av de la Marseillaise; adult/child €5/free; ☉noon-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☞République) A tribute to one of Strasbourg's most famous sons – award-winning illustrator and cartoonist Tomi Ungerer – this museum is housed in the fetching Villa Greiner. The collection discloses the artist's love of dabbling in many genres, from children's book illustrations to satirical drawings and erotica.

Place de la République CITY SQUARE

(☞République) Many of Strasbourg's grandest public buildings, constructed when the city was ruled by the German Reich, huddle northeast of Grande Île around place de la République. The neighbourhood that stretches eastwards to Parc de l'Orangerie is dominated by sturdy stone buildings inspired by late-19th-century Prussian tastes.

Parc de l'Orangerie PARK

(☞Droits de l'Homme) Across from the Palais de l'Europe, this flowery park, designed in the 17th century by Le Nôtre of Versailles fame, is a family magnet with its playgrounds and swan-dotted lake. In summer you can rent **row boats** on Lac de l'Orangerie. Kids can get up close to storks and goats at the park's mini **zoo** (admission free).

Le Vaisseau SCIENCE MUSEUM

(www.levaisseau.com; 1bis rue Philippe Dollinger; adult/child €8/7; ☉10am-6pm Tue-Sun; ☞Winston Churchill) Science is *never* boring at this interactive science and technology museum, 2.5km southeast of the cathedral. There are plenty of hands-on activities to amuse little minds, from crawling through an ant colony to creating cartoons and broadcasting the news.

Jardin des Deux Rives GARDEN

(Two-Shores Garden; ☞Aristide Briand) An expression of flourishing Franco-German friendship, Strasbourg and its German neighbour Kehl have turned former customs posts and military installations into this 60-hectare garden, whose play areas, promenades and parkland straddle both

DON'T MISS

BIENVENUE CHEZ LES EUROCRATS

Should the inner workings of the EU intrigue, you can sit in on debates ranging from lively to yawn-a-minute at the **Parlement Européen** (European Parliament; www.europarl.europa.eu; rue Lucien Fèbvre; ☞Parlement Européen); dates are available from the tourist office or on the website. For individuals it's first-come first-served (bring ID).

A futuristic glass crescent, the Council of Europe's **Palais de l'Europe** (Palace of Europe; www.coe.int; ☞Droits de l'Homme) across the Ill can be visited on free one-hour weekday tours; phone ahead for times and reservations.

It's just a hop across the Canal de la Marne to the swirly silver **Palais des Droits de l'Homme** (European Court of Human Rights; www.echr.coe.int; ☞Droits de l'Homme), the most eye-catching of all the EU institutions.

banks of the Rhine. The centrepiece is Marc Mimram's sleek (and hugely expensive) **suspension bridge**, which has proved a big hit with pedestrians and cyclists. From the tram stop, walk east or take bus 21 for three stops.

River Ill RIVER

(☞Langstross) The leafy paths that shadow the River Ill and its canalised branch, the Fossé du Faux Rempart, are great for an impromptu picnic or a romantic stroll.

Place Gutenberg CITY SQUARE

(☞Langstross) Well worth a peek is for its Renaissance-style **Chambre de Commerce** (Chamber of Commerce).

👉 Tours

Take a DIY spin of the cathedral and the old city with one of the tourist office's 1½-hour **audio guides** (adult/child €5.50/3.50), available in five languages.

Batorama BOAT TRIPS

(www.batorama.fr, in French; adult/child €8.50/4.50; ☉tours half-hourly 9.30am-9pm; ☞Langstross) This outfit runs scenic 70-minute boat trips, which glide along the storybook canals of Petite France, taking in the Vauban Dam

and the glinting EU institutions. Tours depart in front of Palais Rohan.

FREE Brasseries Heineken

BREWERY

(☎03 88 19 57 55; 4 rue St-Charles; ☺tours approx hourly 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) In the greatest of keg-rolling traditions, the Heineken brewery promises to refresh the parts that other lagers cannot reach on two-hour tours (some in English; reserve ahead). The brewery is 2.5km north of Grande Île; take bus 4 to the Schiltigheim Mairie stop in Schiltigheim.

Brasseries Kronenbourg

BREWERY

(☎03 88 27 41 59; 68 rte d'Oberhausbergen; adult/child €6/4; ☺tours approx hourly 10am-4pm Mon-Sat; ☑Ducs d'Alsace) Selling 700 million litres of beer in France every year – enough to fill about 250 Olympic swimming pools! – this brewery is in Cronenbourg, 2.5km northwest of Grande Île. Call ahead to join a thirst-quenching 1½-hour tour (some in English), which includes a tasting.

FREE Cave des Hospices de Strasbourg

WINERY

(www.vins-des-hospices-de-strasbourg.fr, in French; 1 place de l'Hôpital; ☺8.30am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat; ☑Porte de l'Hôpital) This brick-vaulted wine cellar nestles deep in the bowels of Strasbourg's hospital. A hospice back in the days when wine was considered a cure for all ills, today the cellar bottles first-rate Alsatian wines from rieslings to sweet muscats. One of its historic barrels is filled with a 1472 vintage.



Festivals & Events

Mulled wine, spicy *bredele* (biscuits) and a Santa-loaded children's village are all part and parcel of Strasbourg's sparkly **Marché de Noël** (Christmas Market; www.noel.strasbourg.eu), running from the last Saturday in November until 24 December. Strasbourg slides into summer with fireworks, fairs and striking cathedral illuminations at **Les Festiv'Étés** in July and August. Raise a glass to Alsatian beer at October's **Mondial de la Bière** (www.mondialbierestrasbourg.com) and wine at the **Riesling du Monde** (www.riesling-du-monde.com) in March.



Sleeping

It can be tricky to find last-minute accommodation from Monday to Thursday when the European Parliament is in plenary session (see www.europarl.europa.eu for dates). Book ahead for December when beds are at a premium because of the Christmas market. The tourist office can advise about same-night room availability; if you drop by, staff are happy to help reserve a room.

Hôtel Régent Petite France

DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(☎03 88 76 43 43; www.regent-hotels.com; 5 rue des Moulins; r €150-445; ☺☺☺☺Alt Winmärik) Once an ice factory and now Strasbourg's hottest design hotel, this waterfront pile is quaint on the outside and ubercool on the inside. The sleek rooms dressed in muted colours and plush fabrics sport shiny marble bathrooms. Work your relaxed look in the sauna, chic restaurant and Champagne bar with dreamy River Ill views.

JEWISH ALSACE

Interest in Alsace's rich Jewish heritage (http://judaisme.sdv.fr, in French), spanning 1000 years, has grown tremendously. Indeed, the **European Day of Jewish Culture** (www.jewishheritage.org) in September grew out of an initiative in northern Alsace. Famous people of Alsatian-Jewish origin include Captain Alfred Dreyfus (of the Dreyfus Affair), the Marx Brothers (of *Duck Soup*) and Marcel Marceau (the mime artist).

Today most Alsatian Jews live in Strasbourg, whose vibrant Jewish community – proud of its unique liturgical and musical traditions – numbers about 16,000. Alsace is the only region in France in which the majority of the Jews are Ashkenazim, ie they spoke Yiddish in centuries past.

Towns all over the region, including many along the Route des Vins d'Alsace, have historic synagogues and museums with exhibits related to Alsatian Judaism, such as Strasbourg's Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame and Musée Alsacien, Colmar's Musée Bartholdi and the **Musée Judéo-Alsacien** (62a Grand' Rue; adult/child €6/3; ☺10am-noon & 1-6pm Tue-Fri & Sun), housed in a converted synagogue in Bouxwiller, 40km northwest of Strasbourg.

Visit www.tourisme67.com for more background on Judaism in Alsace.

Hôtel du Dragon

SMALL HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 35 79 80; www.dragon.fr; 12 rue du Dragon; s €79-112, d €89-124; 🍷🍷🍷Porte de l'Hôpital) Step through a tree-shaded courtyard and into the, ahhh...blissful calm of this bijou hotel. The dragon receives glowing reviews for its crisp interiors, attentive service and prime location near Petite France.

Hôtel Gutenberg

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 32 17 15; www.hotel-gutenberg.com; 31 rue des Serruriers; r €75-135; 🍷🍷🍷Langstross) Nestled in the flower-strewn heart of Petite France, this hotel is a harmonious blend of 250 years of history and contemporary design – think clean lines, zesty colours and the occasional antique.

Romantik Hôtel Beaucour

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 76 72 00; www.hotel-beaucour.com; 5 rue des Bouchers; s €75-110, d €135-165; 🍷🍷🍷Porte de l'Hôpital) With its antique flourishes and a cosy salon centred on a fireplace, this place positively oozes half-timbered romance. Rooms are stylishly decked out in warm colours and florals, and most feature (like it!) jacuzzi bathtubs.

Hôtel Hannong

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 32 16 22; www.hotel-hannong.com; 15 rue du 22 Novembre; s €88-108, d €132-197; 🍷🍷🍷Alt Winmärik) Minimalist chic best describes the rooms at this design-focused hotel, kitted out with hardwood floors and colour schemes ranging from space-age silver to chocolate-cream. The skylit lounge bar serves tapas and fine wines.

Royal Lutetia

HOTEL €

(☎03 88 35 20 45; www.royal-lutetia.fr; 2bis rue du Général Rapp; d €62-85; 🍷🍷Parc du Contades) A 10-minute stroll north of the centre, this recently revamped hotel has bright and spacious rooms with above-par perks such as flatscreen TVs and free wi-fi.

Le Kléber Hôtel

SMALL HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 32 09 53; www.hotel-kleber.com; in French; 29 place Kléber; s €57-80, d €74-94; 🍷🍷Homme de Fer) So what will sweeten your dreams tonight? Pistachio, Pavlova or maybe Meringue? Highly original and super-central, Le Kléber's rooms are named, and decorated, after fruits, spices and other calorific treats – pick one to suit your taste.

Hôtel Suisse

TRADITIONAL HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 35 22 11; www.hotel-suisse.com; 2-4 rue de la Râpe; s €65, d €75-89; 🍷🍷Langstross) Tucked away in a charming corner of Grand Île, this lemon-fronted hotel exudes Alsa-

tian authenticity with its beams, chandeliers and traditional rooms decorated with solid wood furnishings. Often full.

Camping de la Montagne Verte

CAMPGROUND €

(☎03 88 30 25 46; www.camping-montagne-verte-strasbourg.com; 2 rue Robert Forrer; sites €14-18.50; 🍷Montagne Verte) Pitch up at this quiet, leafy campground, a 10-minute stroll from Montagne Verte tram stop, 3km west of Petite France. It's right next to the cycling lane that heads into town. Bike hire is available for €10/40 per day/week.

Hôtel Au Cerf d'Or

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 88 36 20 05; www.cerf-dor.com; in French; 6 place de l'Hôpital; r €55-110; 🍷🍷🍷Porte de l'Hôpital) A golden *cerf* (stag) hangs proudly out front at this half-timbered Logis de France hotel, with simple, spotless rooms. Best of all it has a jacuzzi, swimming pool, sauna (half-hour €8) and a homely French restaurant.

CIARUS

HOSTEL €

(☎03 88 15 27 88; www.ciarus.com; 7 rue Finkmatt; dm incl breakfast €26, s €46; 🍷) Although the walls are paper-thin and dorms bare-bones – some smelling of eau de damp socks – this hostel is reasonably central and good value. Light sleepers beware: it's popular among night-active school groups. Take bus 2, 4 or 10 to place de Pierre, north from the city centre.

**Eating**

Strasbourg dishes up the freshest local ingredients, with a French knack for presentation and a German liking for gut-busting portions. Appetising restaurants abound on Grande Île: try canalside Petite France for Alsatian fare and half-timbered romance; Grand' Rue for curbside kebabs and *tarte flambée* (a thin-crust pizza dough topped with crème fraîche, onions and lardons); and rue des Veaux or rue des Pucelles for hole-in-the-wall eateries serving the world on a plate.

**La Choucrouterie**

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 88 36 52 87; www.choucrouterie.com; in French; 20 rue St-Louis; choucroute €12-16; 🍷lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily; 🍷Porte de l'Hôpital) Naked ladies straddling giant sausages (on the menu, we hasten to add) and eccentric chefs juggling plates of steaming *choucroute garnie* are just the tip of the theatrical iceberg at this inimitable bistrot and playhouse double act. Speak a few

words of Alsatian and you'll get extra helpings of everything, guaranteed.

Au Crocodile

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎03 88 32 13 02; www.au-crocodile.com, in French; 10 rue de l'Outre; 3-course lunch menus €35, other menus incl drinks €85/115; ☺Tue-Sat; ☒Broglie) This hushed temple of French gastronomy is named after a stuffed toothy critter (now suspended over the foyer) brought back from Egypt by one of Napoléon's generals. Artistically presented specialities such as smooth foie gras with rhubarb chutney and filet mignon in a mountain-cheese crust have won Au Crocodile a Michelin star. Advance reservations recommended.

La Cloche à Fromage

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎03 88 23 13 19; www.cheese-gourmet.com; 27 rue des Tonneliers; fondue €21-25; ☺Tue-Sun; ☒Langstross) *Au revoir* diet...loosen a belt notch or three for Strasbourg's gooiest fondues and *raclette* at this temple to *fromage*, saving an inch for the 200-variety cheese board of Guinness Book of World Records fame.

Maison Kammerzell

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 88 32 42 14; www.maison-kammerzell.com; 16 place de la Cathédrale; menus €27-46; ☒Langstross) Slap-bang on Strasbourg's main square, medieval icon Maison Kammerzell serves well-executed Alsatian cuisine like *baeckeoffe* and *choucroute*. A staircase spirals up to frescoed alcoves and the 1st floor where the views – oh the views! – of the floodlit cathedral are sensational.



Bistrot et Chocolat

CAFÉ €

(www.bistrotetchocolat.net, in French; 8 rue de la Râpe; snacks €4-8, brunch €10-19; ☺10.30am-7pm Tue-Sun; ☒Broglie; ☒Langstross) Chocolate fondue, organic hot chocolate with ginger, chocolate soup sprinkled with gingerbread croutons... this boho-chic bistro is an ode to the cocoa bean. Weekend brunches are a treat. Check the website for details on children's cooking classes.

L'Assiette du Vin

BISTRO €€

(☎03 88 32 00 92; www.assietteduvin.fr, in French; 5 rue de la Chaîne; lunch menus €19, dinner menus €32-55; ☺closed lunch Mon, Sat & Sun; ☒Langstross) Market-fresh cuisine with a twist, discreet service and an award-winning wine list lure discerning foodies to this rustic-chic bistro in the old town. The *plat du jour* is a snip at €8.50.

Maison des Tanneurs

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 88 32 79 70; 42 rue du Bain aux Plantes; mains €14-22; ☺Tue-Sat; ☒Langstross) Even locals book ahead at this former tannery, creaking under the weight of its 16th-century beams and billowing geraniums. *Choucroute* with fat pork knuckles and garlicky Alsatian-style escargot are matched with top-notch pinots and rieslings. Snag a window table for fine views of Petite France's canals.

La Cambuse

SEAFOOD €€

(☎03 88 22 10 22; 1 rue des Dentes; mains €23-27; ☺Tue-Sat; ☒Langstross) All portholes and polished wood, this shipshape bistro is the closest you'll get to dining on a private yacht in Strasbourg. The experimental chef infuses seafood with Asian spices – think sweet and sour turbot and fish *choucroute* with saffron. Reservations essential.

La Bourse

BRASSERIE €€

(☎03 88 36 40 53; 1 place du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny; menus €24-32; ☒Étoile) Under a *trompe l'œil* sky, this art deco brasserie serves deliciously crisp *tartes flambées*, flavoursome *baeckeoffe* and meaty Alsatian staples like *fleischnacka*.

La Tinta

CAFÉ €

(36 rue du Bain aux Plantes; brunch €9, lunch menus €10; ☺Tue-Sat; ☒Alt Winmärik) Words smother the walls of this boho-flavoured literary café. It's a blissfully relaxed spot for lunch or a cup of organic tea with a slice of homemade tart.

Au Coin des Pucelles

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 88 35 35 14; 12 rue des Pucelles; mains €14-22; ☺Tue-Sat; ☒Broglie) This snug *winstub* has just six tables, a red-checked tablecloth on each, and solid Alsatian fare such as *choucroute au canard*. Perfect for a late dinner.

L'Appart à Tartes

CAFÉ €

(9 rue des Dentes; tarts €5-11; ☒Broglie; ☒Langstross) Escape the crowds at this laid-back Petite France café, with tasty sweet and savoury tarts, free wi-fi and a kids' play corner.

Poêles de Carottes

VEGETARIAN €

(www.poelesdecarottes.com, in French; 2 place des Meuniers; menus €11; ☺Tue-Sat; ☒Langstross) Veggie swear by the organic soups, *tajines* and pasta at this wholesomely hip café, painted in mouth-watering orange and lemon hues.

EAT ALSATIAN

Here's what is probably cooking in the kitchen of that cosy *winstub* (Alsatian tavern):

Baeckeoffe Beef, pork, lamb, vegetable and potato stew, marinated in riesling or pinot blanc and slow-cooked in a ceramic dish.

Choucroute garnie Sauerkraut garnished with salty bacon, ham hock and Alsatian-style sausage. Bring an appetite.

Flammekueche *Tarte flambée* in French. A thin-crust pizza dough topped with crème fraîche, onions and lardons. Fingers are allowed!

Fleischnacka Herby minced beef and egg pasta rolls shaped like *schnacka* (snails).

Kougelhoppf Brioche-style raisin cake, baked in its namesake mould, with a hole in the middle and a dusting of icing sugar.

Lewerknepfle Ground liver, shallot and parsley quenelles (dumplings).

Spätzle Thick egg noodles, usually served with onions and/or cheese.

Wädele Pork knuckles, often braised in pinot noir or beer and served with lashings of *choucroute*.

Self-Catering

For picnic supplies:

La Cloche à Fromage boutique

GOURMET FOOD

(32 rue des Tonneliers; ☒ Langstross) Sells creamy Tomme, ripe Camembert and other first-rate cheeses.



Farmers' Market

FOOD MARKET

(place du Marché aux Poissons; ☀ 7am-1pm Sat; ☒ Porte de l'Hôpital) Stalls are piled high with everything from locally produced foie gras to organic fruit and honey.

Monoprix

SUPERMARKET

(5 rue des Grandes Arcades; ☒ Homme de Fer) Everything under one roof.



Drinking

Strasbourg's 53,000 beer-thirsty students keep the scene lively and the bars and clubs pumping at weekends. Among the city's legions of pubs and bars is a glut of student-oriented places on the small streets east of the cathedral such rue des Juifs, rue des Frères and rue des Sœurs.

Jeannette et les Cyclex

BAR

(www.letetdejeannette.com, in French; 30 rue des Tonneliers; ☒ Langstross) Elvis lives on, baby, at this swinging '50s-themed haunt, where classic motorbikes dangle from the chilli-red walls. We dig the good vibes, retro decor and music from rockabilly to Motown.

Académie de la Bière

PUB

(www.academiedelabiere.com, in French; 17 rue Adolphe-Seyboth; ☒ Alt Winmärik) Get the beers in at this chilled Petite France pub

before a boogie in the cellar disco. There are hundreds of brews on offer, from Kronenbourg to cherry-laced krieks.

Bar Exils

BAR

(www.barexils.com, in French; 28 rue de l'Ail; ☒ Langstross) This is student central, with darts and billiards, well-worn sofas and plenty of cheap beer on tap.



Entertainment

Cultural event listings appear in the free monthly *Spectacles* (www.spectacles-publications.com, in French), available at the tourist office.

Boutique Culture

TICKET OUTLET

(place de la Cathédrale, cnr rue Mercière; ☀ Tue-Sat; ☒ Langstross)

Fnac Billetterie

TICKET OUTLET

(www.fnacspectacles.com; 2nd fl, 22 place Kléber; ☀ Mon-Sat; ☒ Homme de Fer)

La Laiterie

LIVE MUSIC

(www.laiterie.artefact.org, in French; 11-13 rue du Hohwald; ☒ Laiterie) Reggae, metal, punk, chanson, blues – Strasbourg's premier concert venue covers the entire musical spectrum and stages some 200 gigs a year. Tickets are available at the door and online. La Laiterie is just a five-minute walk (500m) south of Petite France along rue de Molsheim. Trams B and C stop close by.

Théâtre de la CHOUC'routerie

THEATRE

(☎ 03 88 36 07 28; www.theatredelachouc.com, in French; 20 rue St-Louis; ☒ Porte de l'Hôpital) In 1984 Roger Siffer, a singer, comedian, actor and producer known for his biting

satire, set up this intimate theatre in a former sauerkraut factory. Performances are fun, experimental and trilingual (Alsatian, French and German). The theatre is a five-minute walk west of Porte de l'Hôpital tram stop, on the opposite side of the river to Grand Île.

L'Artichaut

LIVE MUSIC

(<http://lartichaut.fr>, in French; 56 Grand' Rue; ☺Tue-Sun; ☑☑Langstross) The 'artichoke' is the city's quirkiest arts and culture café, hosting free exhibitions, first-rate jazz concerts and jam sessions. The line-up is posted on the door and on the website.

Le Chalet

CLUB

(www.strasbourg-by-night.com, in French; 376 rte de la Wantzenau; ☺Fri & Sat)

This mammoth entertainment complex, a 15-minute taxi ride north of town, has themed bars and two clubs. DJs crank out everything from techno to retro and club classics.

Le Seven

CLUB

(www.lesevenstrasbourg.com, in French; 25 rue des Tonneliers; ☺Wed-Sat) Hip hop, R&B and house dominate the decks at this central club. Though crowds teeter on prepubescent and drinks are pricey, it still throws a decent party and, as its name suggests, stays open until 7am.

Cinéma Star

CINEMA

(www.cinema-star.com, in French; 27 rue du Jeu des Enfants; ☑Homme de Fer) Cinema with nondubbed films, some in English.

Odyssee

CINEMA

(www.cinemaodyssee.com, in French; 3 rue des Francs-Bourgeois; ☑Langstross) An art-house cinema.



Shopping

Strasbourg's swishest shopping street is rue des Hallebardes, whose window displays are real eye candy (**Baccarat** is at No 44). High-street shops punctuate rue des Grandes Arcades and Grand' Rue, while Petite France is crammed with souvenir shops selling stuffed storks and pretzels aplenty. For vintage furniture, hip accessories and works by local creatives, mosey down rue des Veaux.

Information

Linky's Cyber Café (22 rue des Frères; per hr €3; ☺9.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun; ☑Gallia) Central with a speedy connection.

Main tourist office (☎03 88 52 28 28; www.otstrasbourg.fr; 17 place de la Cathédrale; ☺9am-7pm; ☑Langstross) A city-centre walking map with English text costs €1; bus/tram and cycling maps are free. *Strolling in Strasbourg* (€4.50) details six architectural walking tours.

Nouvel Hôpital Civil (☎03 88 11 67 68; rue Koeberlé; ☑Porte de l'Hôpital) 24-hour urgences (casualty ward).

Post office (place de la Cathédrale; ☑Langstross)

Tele SM (3 quai St-Jean; per hr €2; ☺8am-11pm; ☑Faubourg National) Has 40 PCs and discount calls.

Tourist office annexe (☺9am-7pm; ☑Gare Centrale) In the train station's southern wing.

DON'T MISS

PASS THE CHOCOLATE

Strasbourg is now 'chocolate box' with good reason, as it's one of the main stops on **La Route du Chocolat et des Douceurs d'Alsace** (Alsace Chocolate and Sweets Road), stretching 80km north to Bad Bergzabern and 125km south to Heimsbrunn near Mulhouse. Pick up a map at the tourist office to pinpoint Alsace's finest patisseries, chocolatiers, macaroon shops and confectioners. Here are three sweet-toothed favourites to get you started:

» **Mireille Oster** (www.mireille-oster.com, in French; 14 rue des Dentelles; ☑Langstross) Cherubs adorn this heavenly shop where Strasbourg's *pain d'épices* (gingerbread) fairy Mireille Oster tempts with handmade varieties with figs, amaretto, cinnamon and chocolate. Have a nibble before you buy.

» **Christian** (www.christian.fr, in French; 12 rue de l'Outre; ☑Broglie) Sumptuous truffles and pralines, weightless macaroons and edible Strasbourg landmarks – renowned chocolatier Christian's creations are mini works of art.

» **Coco LM** (www.coco-lm.com, in French; 16 rue du Dôme; ☑Broglie) Bakes scrumptious Alsatian gingerbread, *beerawecka* (Alsatian fruit cake), raisin-stuffed *kougelhopf* and a startlingly spicy ginger biscuit called a *gingerli*.

i Getting There & Away

Air

Strasbourg's international **airport** (www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr) is 17km southwest of the city centre (towards Molsheim), near the village of Entzheim.

Ryanair links London Stansted with **Karlsruhe/Baden Baden airport** (www.badenairpark.de), across the Rhine in Germany, 58km north-east of Strasbourg.

Bus

The **Eurolines office** (www.eurolines.com; 6D place d'Austerlitz; ☎Porte de l'Hôpital) is a few blocks southeast of Grande Île; their buses use a **bus stop** (☎Lycée Couffignal) 2.5km further south on rue du Maréchal Lefebvre (facing the Citroën garage).

Strasbourg city bus 21 (€1.40) links the Aristide Briand tram terminus with Kehl, the German town just across the Rhine.

Car & Motorcycle

Rental companies with offices in the south wing of the train station:

Avis (www.avis.com)

Europcar (www.europcar.com)

National-Citer (www.citer.fr, in French)

Sixt (www.sixt.com)

Train

Built in 1883, the **train station** (☎Gare Centrale) was given a 120m-long, 23m-high glass facade and underground galleries in order to welcome the new TGV Est Européen in grand style. On the Grande Île, tickets are available at the **SNCF Boutique** (5 rue des Francs-Bourgeois; ☎Langstross).

DOMESTIC Destinations:

Paris Gare de l'Est; €67, 2¼ hours, 17 daily

Lille €94, four hours, 13 daily

Lyon €52, six hours, five daily

Marseille €87, eight hours, five daily

Metz €23, two hours, 20 daily

Nancy €22, 1½ hours, 25 daily

INTERNATIONAL If you take the Eurostar via Paris or Lille, London is just five hours and 15 minutes away. Cities with direct services include the following:

Basel SNCF €21, 1¼ hours, 25 daily

Brussels-Nord €70, 5¼ hours, three daily

Karlsruhe €22, 40 minutes, 16 daily

Stuttgart €43, 1¼ hours, four TGVs daily

ROUTE DES VINS From Strasbourg, there are trains to Route des Vins destinations including the following:

Colmar €10.50, 30 minutes, 30 daily

Dambach-la-Ville €8, one hour, 12 daily

Obernai €5.50, 30 minutes, 20 daily

Sélestat €7.50, 30 minutes, 46 daily

i Getting Around

To/From the Airport

The speedy new shuttle train links the airport to the train station (€3.50, nine minutes, four hourly); the ticket also covers your onward tram journey into the city centre.

Flight Liner buses (www.flightliner.de) link Strasbourg with Karlsruhe/Baden Baden airport (€17, one hour), across the Rhine. Bus times are coordinated with Ryanair's London services.

Bicycle

A world leader in bicycle-friendly planning, Strasbourg has an extensive and ever-expanding *réseau cyclable* (cycling network). The tourist office stocks free maps.

The city's **Vélocation** (www.velocation.net) system can supply you with a well-maintained one-speed bike (per half-/full day €5/8, Monday to Friday €13), kid's bike (per day €5) or child seat (€2). Helmets are not available. A €100 to €200 deposit is required. Outlets:

City Centre (10 rue des Bouchers; ☎Porte de l'Hôpital)

Train Station (☎Gare Centrale) Situated on Level -1. Adjacent is an 820-place bicycle parking lot (€1 for 24 hours).

Car & Motorcycle


Virtually the whole city centre is either pedestrianised or a hopeless maze of one-way streets, so don't even think of getting around Grande Île by car, or parking there for more than a couple of hours. For details on city-centre parking garages see www.parcus.com.

At Strasbourg's nine P+R (park-and-ride) car parks, all on tram routes, the €2.70 to €3 all-day fee, payable from 7am to 8pm, gets the driver and each passenger a free return tram or bus ride into the city centre. From the autoroute, follow the signs marked 'P+R Relais Tram'. The safest picks are north of the city centre at **Rives de l'Aar** (☎Rives de l'Aar), northwest at **Rotonde** (☎Rotonde) and south at **Baggersee** (☎Baggersee).

Public Transport

Five super-efficient tram lines, A through E, form the backbone of Strasbourg's outstanding public transport network, run by **CTS** (www.cts-strasbourg.fr, in French). The main tram hub is Homme de Fer. Trams generally operate until 12.30am; buses – few of which pass through Grande Île – run until about 11pm. Night buses operate from 11.30pm to 5.30am on Fridays and Saturdays, stopping at nightlife hot spots like La Laiterie.

Tickets, valid on both buses and trams, are sold by bus drivers and ticket machines at tram stops and cost €1.40 (€2.70 return). The 24h Individuel (for one person €4) and Trio (for two to three people €5) tickets, valid for 24 hours from the moment they are stamped, are sold at tourist offices and tram stops.

In the Strasbourg section, the nearest tram stops are indicated with a tram icon .

Route des Vins d'Alsace

The Route des Vins d'Alsace (Alsace Wine Route) is pure fairy-tale stuff: green vines march up the hillsides to castle-topped crags and the mist-enshrouded Vosges, roadside *caves* (wine cellars) lift spirits and half-timbered villages wait to be unwrapped one by one like Christmas gifts. No wonder it's one of France's most popular drives. Corkscrewing through glorious countryside, the entire route stretches 170km from Marlenheim, 20km west of Strasbourg, southwards to Thann, 35km southwest of Colmar.

Local tourist offices can supply you with the excellent English-language map/brochure, *The Alsace Wine Route* (free), and *Alsace Grand Cru Wines*, detailing Alsace's 50 most prestigious AOC winegrowing micro-regions. More information is available online at www.alsace-route-des-vins.com.

The villages mentioned in the following section, listed from north to south, all have plenty of hotels and restaurants, and some have campgrounds. Tourist offices can provide details on local *chambres d'hôte* (B&Bs), which generally cost €40 to €60 for a double.

Tours

For minibus tours of the Route des Vins (reservations can be made via Colmar's tourist office) try these agencies:

LCA Top Tour BUS TOUR
(☎03 89 41 90 88; www.alsace-travel.com; 8 place de la Gare, Colmar; half-day €53-56)

Regioscope BUS TOUR
(☎03 89 44 38 21; www.regioscope.com; morning/afternoon tour €47/55)

Getting There & Around

The Route des Vins comprises several roads (D422, D35, D1B and so on). It is signposted but you might want to pick up a copy of Blay's colour-coded map, *Alsace Touristique* (€5.50). Cyclists have a wide variety of on- and off-road options.

BUS & TRAIN It's entirely possible, if a bit cumbersome, to get around the Route des Vins by

public transport, since almost all the towns and villages mentioned here are served by train from Strasbourg or by train and/or bus from Colmar. Bicycles can be taken on virtually all trains.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Parking can be a nightmare in the high season, especially in Ribeauvillé and Riquewihr; your best bet is to park a bit out of the town centre and walk for a few minutes.

OBERNAI

POP 11,400

Half-timbered houses in sweetshop shades stud the postcard-perfect walled town of Obernai ('nai' rhymes with 'day'), 31km south of Strasbourg. Give the summertime crowds the slip by ducking down cool, flower-bedecked alleyways, such as *ruelle des Juifs*, next to the tourist office.

Sights & Activities

A number of winegrowers have cellars a short walk from town (the tourist office has a map).

Place du Marché

TOWN SQUARE

Life spirals around this market square, put to use each Thursday morning, where you'll find the 16th-century **hôtel de ville** (town hall) embellished with baroque *trompe l'œil*; the Renaissance **Puits aux Six Seaux** (Six Bucket Well) just across rue du Général Gouraud; and the bell-topped, 16th-century **Halle aux Blés** (Corn Exchange).

Ramparts

RAMPART WALK

Stretch your legs by strolling around Obernai's 13th-century ramparts, accessible from the square in front of twin-spired, neo-Gothic **Église St-Pierre et St-Paul**.

Sentier Viticole du Schenkenberg

VINEYARD WALK

This 1.5km wine route meanders through vineyards and begins at the hilltop cross north of town – to get there, follow the yellow signs from the cemetery behind Église St-Pierre et St-Paul.

Sleeping & Eating

La Cloche

HOTEL €

(☎03 88 95 52 89; www.la-cloche.com; 90 rue du Général Gouraud; s/d €50/60, mains €14-18; ) Facing the *hôtel de ville*, this hotel has 20 spacious, wood-furnished rooms, some with old-town views. The rustic restaurant rolls out hearty Alsatian fare like *spätzle* oozing Munster cheese.

Halle aux Blés

ALSATIAN €€

(place du Marché; mains €12-19) The old corn exchange does a brisk trade in regional

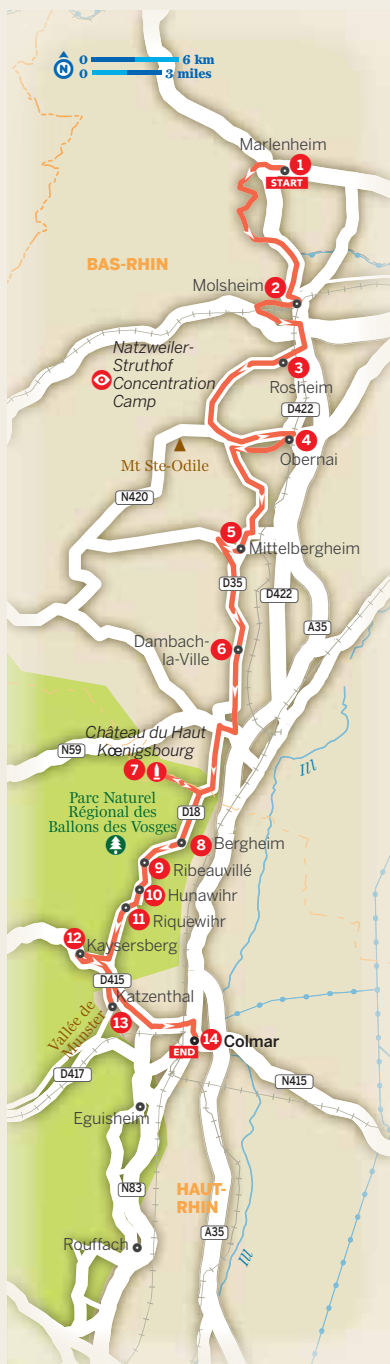
START **MARLENHEIM**
FINISH **COLMAR**
DISTANCE **87KM**
DURATION **ONE TO TWO**
DAYS

Driving Tour Route des Vins d'Alsace

▶ Weaving through lyrical landscapes, this road trip takes in the best of the vine-strewn Route des Vins d'Alsace.

From the Route des Vins gateway,

1 Marlenheim, a well-marked country lane wriggles through bucolic scenery to medieval **2 Molsheim** centred on a picture-perfect square dominated by a carousel and the step-gabled Renaissance *Metzig* (Butcher's Shop). Continue south to **3 Rosheim**, where the striking Romanesque Église St-Pierre-St-Paul raises prudish eyebrows with its, ahem, lasciviously copulating gargoyles! Step inside for a moment of cool contemplation before meandering south to pretty, half-timbered **4 Obernai** to explore the market square and vineyard trail. Views of the Vosges unfold as you head south to the sleepy hamlet of **5 Mittelbergheim**, pausing to taste the local *grand cru* wines at award-winning Domaine Gilg. Even higher peaks slide into view as you cruise south to cellar-studded **6 Dambach-la-Ville**, embraced by ancient town walls, and catch your first tantalising glimpse of the turrets of hilltop **7 Château du Haut Königsbourg**. After detouring for an astounding panorama from the castle ramparts, slip back in time roaming cobbled streets in half-timbered **8 Bergheim** and enchanting tower-speckled **9 Ribeauvillé**. Stork lovers' and would-be mothers' hearts are set aflutter at the Centre de Réintroduction Cigognes & Loutres in nearby **10 Hunawihr**. Set aside time for serendipitous strolls and medieval towers galore in the storybook half-timbered village of **11 Riquewihr**. Contemplate glass-blowing magic and the house of Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer in riverside **12 Kaysersberg**, then wend your way south to little-known **13 Katzenthal** for organic wine tasting at Vignoble Klur. Wrap up your tour with culture and *winstub* dining in canal-laced **14 Colmar**, Alsatian wine capital and birthplace of Statue of Liberty creator Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi.



treats such as *tarte flambée* (€10), which are served under stag antlers and hop wreaths in the beamed dining room.

i Information

Tourist office (☎03 88 95 64 13; www.obernai.fr; place du Beffroi; ☀9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sun) Tucked behind the *hôtel de ville*.

i Getting There & Away

The train station is about 300m east of the old town.

MITTELBERGHEIM

POP 685

Serene, untouristy and set on a hillside, Mittelbergheim sits amid a sea of sylvan grapevines and seasonal wild tulips, its tiny streets lined with sand-hued, red-roofed houses.

👁 Sights & Activities

Each of Mittelbergheim's *caves* (wine cellars) has an old-fashioned, wrought-iron sign hanging out front.

Sentier Viticole

WALK

From the car park on the D362 at the upper edge of the village next to the cemetery, a paved vineyard trail wriggles across the slopes towards the twin-towered **Château du Haut Andlau** and the undulating Vosges.

Domaine Gilg

WINERY

(www.domaine-gilg.com, in French; 2 rue Rotland; ☀8am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 9.30-11.30am Sun) Nip into this friendly family-run winery to taste award-winning wines, including *grand cru* sylvaners, pinots and rieslings.

🍽 Sleeping & Eating

Private accommodation is good value and easy to come by – you'll see signs in windows all over town. For information, see www.pays-de-barr.com.

Hôtel Gilg

HISTORICAL HOTEL €

(☎03 88 08 91 37; www.hotel-gilg.com; 1 rte du Vin; r €59-89, menus €29-68) For a dose of old-fashioned romance, check into this 17th-century half-timbered pile. A spiral staircase leads up to spacious rooms in pretty pastels, some with wooden beams. The elegantly rustic restaurant serves classic French and Alsatian cuisine.

DAMBACH-LA-VILLE

POP 1970

Ringed by vines and sturdy ramparts, this flowery village has some 60 *caves* (wine cellars) but manages to avoid touristic overload. The renowned Frankstein *grand cru* vineyards cover the southern slopes of four granitic hills west and southwest of Dambach.

👁 Sights & Activities

Some of the eye-catching half-timbered houses, painted in shades like pistachio, caramel and raspberry, date from before 1500.

Ramparts

RAMPART WALK

A gentle stroll takes in the 14th-century, pink-granite ramparts, pierced by four gates, three holding aloft watchtowers and bearing quintessentially Alsatian names: Ebersheim, Blienschwiller and Dieffenthal.

WORTH A TRIP

NATZWEILER-STRUTHOF

About 25km west of Obernai stands Natzweiler-Struthof, the only Nazi concentration camp on French territory. In all, some 22,000 (40% of the total) of the prisoners interned here and at nearby annexe camps died; many were shot or hanged. In early September 1944, as US Army forces approached, the 5517 surviving inmates were sent to Dachau.

Today, the sombre remains of the **camp** (www.struthof.fr; adult/child €5/2.50; ☀9am-6.30pm, closed Christmas-Feb) are still surrounded by guard towers and concentric, once-electrified, barbed-wire fences. The four **crématoire** (crematorium ovens), the **salle d'autopsie** (autopsy room) and the **chambre à gaz** (gas chamber), 1.7km from the camp gate, bear grim witness to the atrocities committed here. The nearby **Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté** (☀same as camp) pays homage to Europe's Resistance fighters.

To get there from Obernai, take the D426, D214 and D130; follow the signs to 'Le Struthof'.

It's a pleasant 1½-hour walk through the vineyards on this trail, which begins 70m up the hill from the tourist office on rue du Général de Gaulle. The path meanders among the hallowed vines, passing by hillside **Chapelle St-Sébastien** (☉9am-7pm), known for its Romanesque tower and Gothic choir.

Sleeping **Le Vignoble**

HOTEL €

(☎03 88 92 43 75; www.hotel-vignoble-alsace.fr; 1 rue de l'Église; s/d €60/68; ☉) Housed in a beautifully converted 18th-century barn, this hotel has comfortable wood-beamed rooms in fresh lemon and lime hues. It's well situated in the village centre.

Information

Tourist office (☎03 88 92 61 00; www.pays-de-barr.com; place du Marché; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) In the Renaissance-style *hôtel de ville*. Hands out walking tour and has details on cycling to Itterwiller.

Getting There & Away

The train station is about 1km east of the old town.

SÉLESTAT

POP 19,650

Wedge between Strasbourg, 50km to the north, and Colmar, 23km to the south, Sélestat is an enticing jumble of colourful half-timbered houses and church spires. The town's claim to cultural fame is its incomparable Humanist Library.

Sights & Activities

Bibliothèque Humaniste

LIBRARY

(1 rue de la Bibliothèque; adult/child €4/2.50; ☉9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Founded in 1452, the Humanist Library's stellar collection features a 7th-century book of Merovingian liturgy, a copy of *Cosmographiae Introductio* (printed in 1507), in which the New World was referred to as 'America' for the first time, and – eat your heart out Lapland! – the first written mention of the Christmas tree (1521).

Vieux Sélestat

OLD TOWN

Church spires rise gracefully above the red rooftops of the old town, which hugs the left bank of the River Ill. Some of the finest examples of half-timbered and *trompe-l'œil* buildings can be found along the medieval quai des Tanneurs.

Église St-Georges

CHURCH

(place St-Georges; ☉8am-6pm) One of Alsace's most striking churches, this Gothic giant, built from weighty red sandstone and sporting a colourful mosaic-tile roof, is illuminated by curtains of stained glass in the choir.



Montagne des Singes

FAMILY ATTRACTION

(Monkey Mountain; www.montagnedessinges.com; Kintzheim; adult/child €8.50/5; ☉10am-noon & 1-6pm, closed Dec-Mar) Kids love to feed the free-roaming Barbary macaques and their cheeky infants popcorn (special monkey popcorn, of course) at this 6-acre woodland park. Take the D35 to Kintzheim, 6km west of Sélestat.

Marché

MARKET

(8am-noon Tue) A huge outdoor market, held since 1435, takes over the streets around Romanesque Église St-Foy.

Marché du Terroir

MARKET

(place Vanolles; 8am-noon Sat) Local-produce market, on the southern edge of the old town, selling home-grown fruit and veggies.

Information

Tourist office (☎03 88 58 87 20; www.selestat-tourisme.com; bd du Général Leclerc; ☉9am-noon & 2-5.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sat) On the edge of the town centre, two blocks from the Bibliothèque Humaniste.

Getting There & Around

The tourist office rents out **bicycles** (two hours/ half-day/day €7/9/14; deposit €150) in summer.

The train station is 1km west of the Bibliothèque Humaniste.

BERGHEIM

POP 1890

Enclosed by a sturdy 14th-century ring wall, overflowing with geraniums and enlivened by half-timbered houses in shocking pastels, Bergheim is a joy to behold. But things have not always been so cheerful: overlords, stampeding invaders, women burnt at the stake for witchcraft – this tiny village has seen the lot.

A stroll through the cobbled streets of the well-preserved medieval centre takes in the early Gothic **church**, the wall-mounted **sundial** at 44 Grand' Rue dating from 1711, and the imposing, turreted **Porte Haute**, Bergheim's last remaining town gate. Outside across the park sits the gnarled **Herengarten linden tree**, planted around 1300. A 2km path circumnavigates the

FOREST FANTASY

What better place to go back to nature than at dreamy **Hôtel de l'illwald** (☎03 90 56 11 40; www.illwald.fr; Schnellenbuhl; r €72-85; 🍷), bordering the lushly forested Ill'Wald nature reserve, which harbours France's largest population of wild deer. This half-timbered, red-sandstone hotel keeps the mood intimate in gorgeous rooms, some sleek with hardwood floors and four-poster beds, others rustic with warm pine, antique furnishings and downy bedding. After a day spent walking or cycling, come home to drinks by an open fire and dinner in the frescoed restaurant. The hotel is off the D424 in Schnellenbuhl, 6km south of Sélestat.

town's ramparts. Bergheim's *grands crus* labels are Kanzlerberg and Altenberg de Bergheim.

The tiny **tourist office** (☎03 89 73 31 98; ☉9.30-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) is between the 18th-century **hôtel de ville** and the deconsecrated **Ancienne Synagogue** (rue des Juifs), now a cultural centre.

Just inside the Porte Haute, **La Cour du Bailli** (☎03 89 73 73 46; www.cour-bailli.com; 57 Grand' Rue; r €83-118, menus €20-31; 🍷) is draped around a 16th-century courtyard. The countrified studios and apartments all have kitchenettes. Factor in downtime in the pool and stone-built spa, which pamper with luscious vinotherapy treatments. The atmospheric cellar restaurant serves wine-drenched specialties like *coq au riesling*. There's no lift so be prepared to lug your bags.

HAUT KÖNIGSBOURG

On its fairy-tale perch above vineyards and hills, the turreted red-sandstone **Château du Haut Königsbourg** (www.haut-koenigsbourg.fr; adult/child €7.50/free; ☉9.15am-5.15pm) is worth the detour for the wraparound panorama from its ramparts, taking in the Vosges, the Black Forest and, on cloud-free days, the Alps. Audioguides delve into the turbulent 800-year history of the castle, which makes a very medieval impression despite having been reconstructed, with German imperial pomposity, by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1908.

RIBEAUVILLÉ

POP 5100

Nestled snugly in a valley, presided over by a castle, its winding alleys brimming with half-timbered houses – medieval Ribeauvillé is a Route des Vins must. The local *grands crus* are Kirchberg de Ribeauvillé, Osterberg and Geisberg.

👁 Sights & Activities

Vieille Ville

OLD TOWN

Along the main street that threads through the old town keep an eye out for the 17th-century **Pfifferhüs** (Fifers' House; 14 Grand' Rue), which once housed the town's five-playing minstrels; the **hôtel de ville** (across from 64 Grand' Rue) and its Renaissance fountain; and the nearby clock-equipped **Tour des Bouchers** (Butchers' Bell Tower).

FREE Cave de Ribeauvillé

WINERY

(www.cave-ribeauville.com; 2 rte de Colmar; ☉8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sat & Sun) France's oldest winegrowers' cooperative, founded in 1895, has a viniculture museum, informative brochures and free tastings of its excellent wines, made with all seven of the grape varieties grown in Alsace. On weekends it's staffed by local winegrowers. It's just across two roundabouts north from the tourist office.

Castle Ruins

WALK

West and northwest of Ribeauvillé, the ruins of three 12th- and 13th-century hill-top castles – **St-Ulrich** (530m), **Giersberg** (530m) and **Haut Ribeaupierre** (642m) – can be reached on a hike (three hours return) beginning at place de la République (at the northern tip of Grand' Rue).

🍷 Sleeping & Eating

Hôtel de la Tour

HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 73 72 73; www.hotel-la-tour.com; 1 rue de la Mairie; s €69-72, d € 73-79; 🍷) Ensclosed in a stylishly converted winery, this half-timbered hotel has quaint and comfy rooms, some with views of the Tour des Bouchers.

Camping Municipal Pierre de Coubertin

CAMPGROUND €

(☎03 89 73 66 71; 23 rue Landau; sites €16.50; 🍷) This shady campground, with bike and canoe rental and a playground, is 500m east of the town centre.

Zum Pfifferhüs

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 89 73 62 28; 14 Grand' Rue; menus €22; Fri-Tue) Pork cheeks braised in pinot noir, pike dumplings and oxtail are among the forti-

fying specialties on the menu at this convivial wood-beamed *winstub* in the historic Fifers' House.

Information

Tourist office (☎03 89 73 23 23; www.ribeauville-riquewihr.com; 1 Grand' Rue; ☎9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) At the southern end of one-way Grand' Rue.

HUNAWIHR

POP 630

You're absolutely guaranteed to see storks in the quiet walled hamlet of Hunawihr, 1km south of Ribeauvillé. On a hillside just outside the centre, the 16th-century fortified **church** has been a *simultaneum* – serving both the Catholic and Protestant communities – since 1687.



Centre de Réintroduction Cigognes & Loutres

WILDLIFE CENTRE

(Stork & Otter Reintroduction Centre; www.cigogne-loutre.com, in French; adult/child €8.50/5.50; ☎10am-6pm, closed mid-Nov–Mar) About 500m east of Hunawihr, this delightful centre is home base for 200 free-flying storks; visit in spring to see hatchlings. Cormorants, penguins, otters and sea lions show off their fishing prowess several times each afternoon.

Jardins des Papillons

BUTTERFLY HOUSE

(www.jardinsdespapillons.fr; adult/child €7.50/5; ☎10am-6pm, closed Nov–Easter) Stroll among exotic free-flying butterflies; the butterfly gardens are near to the Centre de Réintroduction Cigognes & Loutres.

RIQUEWIHR

POP 1310

Competition is stiff but Riquewihr is, just maybe, *the* most enchanting town on the Route des Vins. Medieval ramparts enclose its walkable centre, a photogenic maze of twisting lanes, hidden courtyards and half-timbered houses – each brighter and lovelier than the next. Of course, its chocolate-box looks also make it popular, so arrive in the early morning or evening to appreciate the town at its peaceful best.



Sights & Activities

Dolder

CITY GATE

(admission €3, incl Tour des Voleurs €5; ☎10.30am-1pm & 2-6pm) This late 13th-century stone and half-timbered gate, topped by a 25m bell tower, is worth a look for its panoramic views and small local-history museum.

Tour des Voleurs

TOWER

(Thieves' Tower; admission €3, incl Dolder €5; ☎10am-1pm & 2-6pm Easter–1 Nov) From the Dolder, rue des Juifs (site of the former Jewish quarter) leads down the hill to this medieval stone tower. Inside is a gruesome torture chamber with English commentary and an old-style winegrower's kitchen.

Maison de Hansi

MUSEUM

(16 rue du Général de Gaulle; adult/child €2/free; ☎10am-6pm Tue–Sun) Peer into the imagination of celebrated Colmar-born illustrator Jean-Jacques Waltz (1873–1951), aka Hansi, whose idealised images of Alsace are known around the world. On display are the artist's posters, children's books, engravings and even wine labels.

Sentier Viticole des Grands Crus

WALK

A yellow-marked 2km trail takes you out to acclaimed local vineyards, Schoenenbourg (north of town) and Sporen (southeast of town), while a 15km trail with red markers takes you to five nearby villages. Both can be picked up next to Auberge du Schoenenbourg, 100m to the right of the *hôtel de ville*.



Sleeping & Eating

Sugary smells of macaroons, a tradition since coconuts were first brought here in the 1700s, waft through the centre, where you'll find confectioners, *winstubs* and bakeries selling humongous pretzels.

STORKS OF ALSACE

White storks (*cigognes*), prominent in local folklore, are Alsace's most-beloved symbols. Believed to bring luck (as well as babies), they winter in Africa and then spend summer in Europe, feeding in the marshes and building twig nests on church steeples and rooftops.

In the mid-20th century, environmental changes reduced stork numbers catastrophically. By the early 1980s only two pairs were left in the wild, so research and breeding centres were set up to establish a year-round Alsatian stork population. The program has been a huge success and today Alsace is home to more than 400 pairs – some of which you are bound to spot (or hear bill-clattering) on the Route des Vins.

Hôtel de la Couronne

HOTEL €

(☎03 89 49 03 03; www.hotelde lacouronne.com; 23 rue Landau; s €49-63, d €56-75; @) Worthy of Sleeping Beauty herself with its spiral staircase, 16th-century tower and fragrant wisteria, this hotel has country-style rooms with crisp floral fabrics, low oak beams and period furnishings; many have views over the rooftops to the hills beyond. The only downside: there's no lift.



Table du Gourmet

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎03 89 49 09 09; www.jlbrendel.com; 5 rue de la Première Armée; menus €39-95; ☹closed Wed & Thu lunch, Tue) Michelin-starred chef John-Lac Brendel is justly famous for his creative take on seasonal cuisine using organic home-grown produce – from crunchy spring asparagus to plump autumn escarrot. The fire-red walls, crisp white linen and contemporary art contrast beautifully with the beams of the original 16th-century structure. Reserve ahead.

i Information

Tourist office (☎03 89 73 23 23; www.ribeauville-riqewihr.com; 2 rue de la Première Armée; ☹9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) In the centre of the old town.

KAYSERSBERG

POP 2770

Kaysersberg, 10km northwest of Colmar, is an instant heart-stealer with its backdrop of gently sloping vines, hilltop castle and 16th-century fortified bridge spanning the gushing River Weiss.

👁 Sights & Activities

Audioguides of the town (1½ to two hours, €5) are available from the tourist office.

Vieille Ville

OLD TOWN

An old-town saunter brings you to the ornate Renaissance **hôtel de ville** and the red-sandstone **Église Ste Croix** (☉9am-4pm), whose altar has 18 painted haut-relief panels of the Passion and the Resurrection. Out front, a Renaissance **fountain** holds aloft a statue of Emperor Constantine.

Musée Albert Schweitzer

MUSEUM

(126 rue du Général de Gaulle; adult/child €2/1; ☉9am-noon & 2-6pm) The house where the musicologist, medical doctor and 1952 Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) was born is now this museum, with exhibits on the good doctor's life in Alsace and Gabon.

Verrerie d'Art

GLASS-BLOWING

(30 rue du Général de Gaulle; ☹closed Sun & Mon) Many of the colourful half-timbered and baroque houses lining rue du Général de Gaulle harbour art galleries and workshops, such as this one where you can watch master glass-blowers doing their stuff.

Sentiers Viticoles

VINEYARD WALKS

Footpaths lead in all directions through glens and vineyards. A 10-minute walk above town, the remains of the massive, crenulated **Château de Kaysersberg** stand surrounded by vines; other destinations include Riquewihr (two hours) and Ribeauvillé (four hours). These paths begin through the arch to the right as you face the entrance to the *hôtel de ville*.

🛏 Sleeping

Hôtel Constantin

HOTEL €

(☎03 89 47 19 90; www.hotel-constantin.com; 10 rue du Père Kohlmann; d €58-74; ☹) Originally a winegrower's house in the heart of the old town, this hotel has 20 clean and modern rooms with wood furnishings.

i Information

Tourist office (☎03 89 71 30 11; www.kaysersberg.com; 37 rue du Général de Gaulle; ☉9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) Inside the *hôtel de ville*; supplies walking-tour brochures as well as hiking and cycling maps, and helps with *chambres d'hôte* reservations; free internet and wi-fi.

KATZENTHAL

POP 550

Close-to-nature Katzenthal, 5km south of Kaysersberg, is great for tiptoeing off the tourist trail for a while. *Grand cru* vines ensnare the hillside, topped by the medieval ruins of Château du Wineck, where walks through forest and vineyard begin.



Vignoble Klur

(☎03 89 80 94 29; www.klur.net; 105 rue des Trois Epis; r €80-110; 🍷) an organic family-run winery, has it all – wine tastings, Alsatian cookery classes, herb walks in the vineyards, furniture-making workshops and a tandem to pedal through the vines *à deux*. Ochre walls and warm wood create a cosy feel in the guesthouse, where you can make yourself at home in a sunny apartment with a kitchenette, read a book by the open fire in the salon, or unwind in the organic sauna. Don't miss Jean-Louis Frick's hilarious mural of hedonistic wine lovers above the entrance – it has raised a few local eyebrows, apparently.

Colmar

POP 67,700

Capital of the Alsace wine region and a happy-ever-after fairy-tale of a city if ever there was one, Colmar is a beguiling maze of higgledy-piggledy lanes, where ginger-bready half-timbered houses and the tranquil canals of Petite Venise elicit little gasps of wonder.

Quaintness aside, Colmar's illustrious past is clearly etched in its magnificent churches and museums, which celebrate local legends from Bartholdi (of Statue of Liberty fame) to the revered Issenheim Altarpiece.

Sights

There's no place like the old town for ditching the map to wander streets like rue des Clefs, Grand' Rue and rue des Marchands, punctuated by impeccably restored half-timbered houses in sugared-almond colours.

Petite Venise

HISTORIC QUARTER

One of Colmar's biggest drawcards is its storybook Little Venice quarter, laced with canals and crammed with half-timbered houses festooned with geraniums. You can

almost picture merchants at work in the Middle Ages wandering streets like rue des Tanneurs, with its rooftop verandas for drying hides, and quai de la Poissonnerie, the former fishers' quarter.

Rowboats (€6 per 30 minutes) depart next to **rue de Turenne** bridge and are a relaxed way see Petite Venise from the water. The bridge is also the best spot to see the quarter light up after dark.

Musée d'Unterlinden

ART MUSEUM

(www.musee-unterlinden.com; 1 rue d'Unterlinden; adult/child incl audioguide €7/3; ☉9am-6pm Mon-Sun) Gathered around a Gothic-style Dominican cloister, this museum hides a prized collection of medieval stone statues, late-15th-century prints by Martin Schongauer as well as an ensemble of Upper Rhine Primitives.

The star attraction, though, is the late-Gothic **Rétable d'Issenheim** (Issenheim Altarpiece). Hailed as one of the most profound works of faith ever created and ascribed to the painter Mathias Grünewald and the sculptor Nicolas of Hagenau, the altarpiece realistically depicts scenes from

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

FRANCINE KLUR: VINTNER AT VIGNOBLE KLUR

Wine appreciation is 30% about the wine itself and 70% about the rest – the company, the food, the scenery, the ambience. That's why we take a holistic approach at Vignoble Klur.

Organic Grapes

For me, producing organic, biodynamic wines goes beyond the solar power and natural fertilisers we use – it's about respecting the land and what it can give; doing something out of passion, not profit.

Alsatian Wine

There's an Alsatian wine for every occasion. Try a light, citrusy sylvaner with *tarte flambée* or foie gras, or a crisp, dry riesling with fish or *choucroute*. Gewürztraminer is round and full of exotic fruit and spices, making it the ideal partner for Munster cheese, charcuterie and Asian food. Muscat is aromatic and flowery – great with asparagus or as an aperitif. Pick full-bodied pinot noirs for red meat.

Route des Vins

The Route des Vins is different from France's other wine regions because the villages are small and tight-knit, making it easy for visitors to get acquainted with our wine, food and culture. There are no grand châteaux but there is a real neighbourly feel – our doors are always open.

Insider Tips

Take a day to stroll or cycle through the vineyards, stopping for a wine tasting, lunch and to simply enjoy the atmosphere. Visit famous villages like Riquewihr and Ribeauvillé in the evening to have the streets to yourself. My favourite seasons are autumn, when the heady scent of new wine is in the air, and spring, when the cherry trees are in bloom.

the New Testament, from the Nativity to the Resurrection.

The museum's stellar **modern art collection** showcases Monet, Picasso and Renoir originals.

Musée Bartholdi

MUSEUM

(www.musee-bartholdi.com, in French; 30 rue des Marchands; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☎10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon) In the house where Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi was born, this museum pays homage to the sculptor who captured the spirit of a nation with his Statue of Liberty. Look out for the full-size plaster model of Lady Liberty's left ear (the lobe

is watermelon-sized!) and the Bartholdi family's sparklingly bourgeois apartment. A ground-floor room shows 18th- and 19th-century Jewish ritual objects.

Église St-Matthieu

CHURCH

(Grand' Rue; ☎10am–noon & 3–5pm) Quintessentially Protestant in its austerity, this church has something of a split personality. From 1715 to 1987, a wall divided the soaring 14th-century Gothic choir from the nave. This arrangement allowed the 14th-century *jubé* (rood screen) to survive the counter-Reformation.

Colmar

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles



Église des Dominicains

CHURCH

(place des Dominicains; adult/child €1.50/0.50; ☉10am-1pm & 3-6pm mid-Mar-Dec) This desanctified Gothic church shelters the celebrated triptych *La Vierge au Buisson de Roses* (The Virgin in the Rose Bush), painted by Martin Schongauer in 1473. The stained glass dates from the 14th and 15th centuries.

Maison des Têtes

HISTORIC HOUSE

(House of the Heads; 19 rue des Têtes) True to its name, this step-gabled house, built in 1609 for a wealthy wine merchant, is festooned with 106 grimacing faces and heads of animals, devils and cherubs.

Ancienne Douane

OLD CUSTOMS

(place de l'Ancienne Douane) At the southern tip of rue des Marchands is this late-medieval old customs house, with its loggia and variegated tile roof, which now hosts temporary exhibitions and concerts.

Collégiale St-Martin

CHURCH

(place de la Cathédrale; ☉8am-7pm) Delicate stonework guides the eye to the mosaic-tiled roof and Mongol-style copper spire (1572) of this Gothic church, where you might spot a stork if you're lucky.

Musée du Jouet

TOY MUSEUM

(www.museejouet.com, in French; 40 rue Vau-ban; adult/child €4.50/3.50; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) Kids of every age delight at the sight of toys from generations past, from demure 1950s Barbies to Gaultier-

LADY LIBERTY

Prepare for déjà vu as you approach Colmar on the route de Strasbourg (N83), 3km north of the old town, and spy the spitting image of the Statue of Liberty, albeit on a smaller scale. Bearing her torch aloft, this 12m-high, copper-green replica was erected to mark the centenary of the death of local lad Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1834–1904). We wonder how this little lady (four times smaller than her big sister across the Pond) feels about her humble home on a roundabout. New York Harbour it isn't, but she's an icon none the less.

clad dolls and, every little boy's dream, Hornby train sets, at this museum.

Maison Pfister

HISTORIC HOUSE

(opposite 36 rue des Marchands) With its delicately painted panels, elaborate oriel window and carved wooden balcony, this 16th-century house is an immediate attention-grabber.

Maison zum Kragen

HISTORIC HOUSE

(9 rue des Marchands) This 15th-century house is identified by its much-photographed sculpture of a *marchand* (merchant).

Colmar**📍 Top Sights**

Église St-Matthieu.....	D3
Musée Bartholdi.....	C4
Musée d'Unterlinden.....	B2
Petite Venice.....	C5

📍 Sights

1 Ancienne Douane.....	C4
2 Collégiale St-Martin.....	C3
3 Église des Dominicains.....	B3
4 Maison des Têtes.....	B3
5 Maison Pfister.....	C4
6 Maison zum Kragen.....	C4
7 Musée du Jouet.....	D2
8 Rue de Turenne Bridge.....	C5
9 Synagogue.....	D4

📍 Sleeping

Hôtel les Têtes.....	(see 4)
10 Hôtel Le Rapp.....	B4

11 Hôtel St-Martin.....	C4
12 Le Maréchal.....	B5
13 Maison Martin Jund.....	D3

📍 Eating

14 Au Croissant Doré.....	C4
15 Aux Trois Poissons.....	D5
16 Choco en Têtes.....	B2
17 Fromagerie St-Nicolas.....	C3
18 Jadis et Gourmande.....	C4
La Maison des Têtes.....	(see 4)
19 Le Petit Gourmand.....	C5
20 Les Foie Gras de Liesel.....	C5
Maison Martin Jund.....	(see 13)
21 Restaurant Le Streusel.....	D4
22 Tentations.....	C5

📍 Entertainment

23 Comédie de l'Est.....	A1
24 Fnac Billetterie.....	D3
25 Théâtre Municipal.....	B2

Synagogue

SYNAGOGUE

(☎03 89 41 38 29; rue de la Cigogne) God only knows why Colmar's classical 19th-century synagogue has its very own tiny belfry (Jews have no tradition of ringing bells). Call ahead to visit the interior.



Festivals & Events

Folksy **Soirées Folkloriques** (free performances of traditional Alsatian music and dancing) get toes tapping on Tuesday evenings from mid-May to mid-September. Orchestras strike up in historic venues across Colmar, including Musée d'Unterlinden, during July's **Festival International de Colmar** (www.festival-colmar.com). In summer, villages all over Alsace throw merry **Fêtes du Vin** (Wine Festivals); the tourist office has details. Colmar's magical **Marché de Noël** (Christmas Market; www.noel-colmar.com) runs from the last Saturday in November to 31 December.



Sleeping

Whether you're dreaming of canalside romance or a night in a working winery, Colmar has inexpensive and atmospheric *chambres d'hôte* on almost every corner. Book well ahead for Christmas, Easter and the high summer season.

WORTH A TRIP

THE STAR OF CITADELS

Shaped like an eight-pointed star, Vauban's fortified town of **Neuf-Brisach** was commissioned by Louis XIV in 1697 to strengthen French defences and prevent the area from falling to the Habsburgs.

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 2008, the citadel has remarkably well-preserved fortifications. The **Musée Vauban** (7 place de Belfort; adult/child €2.50/1.65; ☎10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon May-Sep), below the porte de Belfort gate, tells the history of the citadel through models, documents and building plans. Neuf-Brisach is just 4km from its German twin Breisach am Rhein on the banks of the River Rhine.

To reach Neuf-Brisach, 16km southeast of Colmar, follow the signs on the D415.

Hôtel les Têtes

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 24 43 43; www.maisondestetetes.com; 19 rue des Têtes; d €91-146; ☎) Luxurious but never precious, this hotel occupies the magnificent Maison des Têtes. Each of its 21 rooms has rich wood panelling, an elegant sitting area, a marble bathroom and romantic views. Definitely honeymoon material.

Chez Leslie

B&B €€

(☎03 89 79 98 99; www.chezleslie.com; 31 rue de Mulhouse; s €57-62, d €74-79; ☎☎☎) Insider tips on Colmar, a high chair for your baby, afternoon tea in the garden – nothing is too much trouble for your kind host Leslie at her attractively restored 1905 town house. Daylight spills into uniquely decorated rooms with hardwood floors and antique beds. It's five minutes' stroll west of the train station.



Maison Martin Jund

B&B €

(☎03 89 41 58 72; www.martinjund.com; 12 rue de l'Ange; r €30-55, apt €55-85; ☎) Surrounding a courtyard in the backstreets of the old town, this rosy half-timbered house shelters an organic winery and bright, well-kept studios, many with living rooms and kitchenettes. Breakfast is a treat, with fresh croissants and juice, homemade jams and yoghurt.

Hôtel St-Martin

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 24 11 51; www.hotel-saint-martin.com; 38 Grand' Rue; s €79, d €89-115; ☎☎☎) What a location! Right on the place de l'Ancienne Douane, this 14th-century patrician house captures the elegance of yesteryear in rooms dressed with handcrafted furniture. Choose a top-floor room for rooftop views. Family rooms are available.

Le Maréchal

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 41 60 32; www.hotel-le-marechal.com; 46 place des Six Montagnes Noires; s €85-95, d €105-140; ☎) Peppered with antiques, this 16th-century hotel in Petite Venise cranks up the romance in its cosy (read small) rooms, many with low beams, canopy beds and canal views. Splashing out gets you your own jacuzzi.

Grand Hôtel Bristol

TRADITIONAL HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 23 59 59; www.grand-hotel-bristol.com; 7 place de la Gare; r €96-130, menus €44-75; ☎☎☎) Historic meets contemporary at the Bristol. A marble staircase sweeps up to modern rooms and a spa whose sundeck has fabulous city views. In the mood to celebrate? Snag a table at Le Rendez-vous de

DON'T MISS

THE EPICURE TOUR

Colmar is an exceptional city for all-out indulgence. So go, assemble your gourmet picnic:

- » **Fromagerie St-Nicolas** (18 rue St-Nicolas; ☹closed Sun, Mon morning) Follow your nose to pungent Munster, Tomme and ripe Camembert. BYOB (bring your own baguette) and they'll make you a sandwich.
- » **Les Foie Gras de Liesel** (3 rue Turenne; ☹Tue-Sat) Marco and Marianne Willmann produce the silkiest, most subtly flavoured goose and duck foie gras in town. Check out their tastings to enjoy it with fresh bread, fig chutney and a glass of Gewürztraminer or pinot gris.
- » **Choco en Têtes** (7 rue des Têtes; ☹closed Sun, Mon morning) Edible art describes this chocolatier's seasonally inspired truffles and pralines. Kids love the chocolate stork eggs.
- » **Tentations** (quai de la Poissonnerie) Mountains of farm-fresh cheeses and fabulously herby *saucisson* stop you in your tracks for a nibble at this hole-in-the-wall deli.
- » **Maison Martin Jund** (www.martinjund.com; 12 rue de l'Ange; ☹tastings 9am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Need something to wash it all down? Head to this organic winery to taste home-grown pinots, rieslings and sylvaners.

Chasse restaurant, awarded a Michelin star for Mickaela Peters' imaginative take on regional cuisine.

Hôtel Le Rapp

HOTEL €€

(☎03 89 41 62 10; www.rapp-hotel.com; 1-5 rue Weinemer; s €70-80, d €95-115; 🍷🍷🍷) On the edge of the old town, this Logis de France hotel has classically elegant rooms as well as a pool, sauna, hammam and fitness room.

**Eating**

The old town is liberally sprinkled with bistros and *winstubs*, especially place de l'Ancienne Douane, rue des Marchands and Petite Venise.

La Maison des Têtes

FRENCH €€

(☎03 89 24 43 43; 19 rue des Têtes; menus €30-65; ☹closed lunch Tue, dinner Sun & Mon) Behind the leaded windows of the Maison des Têtes awaits a sumptuous dining room, embellished with carved wood, wrought iron and stained glass. Full-bodied wines marry well with refined French-Alsatian dishes such as homemade goose foie gras with riesling, and sea bass with pike mousse and Champagne sauce.

Le Petit Gourmand

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 89 41 09 32; 9 quai de la Poissonnerie; menus €23-26; ☹Tue-Sun) Just a few lucky, lucky diners can eat at this Lilliputian *winstub*, with a pontoon on the river for warm

nights. The welcome is heartfelt and the *menu* an Alsatian feast that might include fresh duck foie gras with figs and gingerbread and Jean-Pierre's oh-so-smooth *mousse au chocolat*.

Aux Trois Poissons

SEAFOOD €€

(☎03 89 41 25 21; 15 quai de la Poissonnerie; menus €21-45; ☹closed dinner Sun, Tue & Wed) Oil paintings on the walls and Persian carpets on the floor give this fish restaurant a hushed, elegant atmosphere. The chef's signatures include *sandre sur lit de choucroute* (pike-perch on a bed of sauerkraut) and flavoursome bouillabaisse.

Restaurant Le Streusel

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 89 24 98 02; 4 passage de l'Ancienne Douane; mains €11-16) Dig into good old-fashioned Alsatian cooking, from *fleischnacka* to *choucroute* with stubby pork knuckles, at this beamed 16th-century farmhouse-turned-restaurant. Plump for a table in the cobbled courtyard in summer. The €7 *plat du jour* is a bargain.

Au Croissant Doré

TEA ROOM €

(28 rue Marchands; tarts €7-8; ☹Tue-Sun; 🍷) Push past the bubblegum-pink art nouveau facade to experience *la vie en rose*. A gramophone and chanson set the tone in this delightfully nostalgic *salon de thé*, rolling out crisp *tarte flambée* and fruit tarts that crumble just so.

Jadis et Gourmande

TEAROOM €

(8 place du Marché aux Fruits; plats du jour €8.50-10.50) A little girl's dream of a *salon de thé*, with an all-wood interior, vintage teddies galore and blankets begging a snuggle. This is a relaxed place for lunch, a glass of wine or a slice of homemade apple strudel.



Entertainment

Fnac Billetterie

TICKET OUTLET

(☎08 92 68 36 22; www.fnacspectacles.com; 1 Grand' Rue; ☎2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat)

Théâtre Municipal

THEATRE

(☎03 89 20 29 02; 3 rue Unterlinden) Next to the Musée d'Unterlinden, this is Colmar's biggest stage, hosting concerts, ballet, plays and even the occasional opera.

Comédie de l'Est

THEATRE

(www.atelierdurhin.com, in French; 6 rte d'Ingersheim) Experimental theatre, housed in a former factory, 400m northwest of Colmar.



Information

Cyber Didim (9 rue du Rempart; per hr €2.80; ☎10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Upstairs at the doner kebab place.

Hôpital Pasteur (☎03 89 12 40 00; 39 av de la Liberté; ☎24hr) Situated 700m west of the train station and served by bus lines 1, 3, 10, A, C and S.

Post office (36 av de la République) Has exchange services.

CYCLING THE VINES

Colmar is a great base for slipping into a bicycle saddle to pedal along the Route des Vins and the well-marked Franco-German trails of the nearby Rhine (www.2rives3ponts.eu, in French). Get your two-wheel adventure started by clicking onto www.tourisme68.com and www.tourisme67.com, with detailed information on everything from bicycle hire to luggage-free cycling holidays, itinerary ideas and downloadable route maps.

If you'd rather join a group, **Bicyclette Go** (☎06 87 47 44 31; www.bicyclettego.com; 2 impasse du Tokay, Voegtlinshoffen), 12km south of Colmar, arranges all-inclusive half-day to two-week cycling tours in the region.

Tourist office (☎03 89 20 68 92; www.ot-colmar.fr; 4 rue d'Unterlinden; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) Can help find accommodation and supply information on hiking, cycling and bus travel (including schedules) along the Route des Vins and in the Massif des Vosges.



Getting There & Away

AIR Trinalational **Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport** (EuroAirport; www.euroairport.com) is 60km south of Colmar.

BUS Public buses are not the quickest way to explore Alsace's Route des Vins but they are a viable option; destinations served include Riquewihr, Hunawihr, Ribeauvillé, Kayersberg and Eguisheim.

The open-air bus terminal is to the right as you exit the train station. Timetables are posted and are also available at the tourist office or online (www.l-k.fr, in French).

Line 1076 goes to Neuf-Brisach (€3.30, 30 minutes), continuing on to the German city of Freiburg (€8, 1¼ hours, seven daily Monday to Friday, four daily weekends).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Cars can be hired from **ADA** (www.ada.fr, in French; 22bis rue Stanislas). **Avis** (www.avis.com) has an agency in the train station.

TRAIN Colmar has train connections to the following:

Basel SNCF €12, 43 minutes, 25 daily

Mulhouse €7.50, 18 minutes, 38 daily

Paris Gare de l'Est; €74, three hours by direct TGV, 17 daily

Strasbourg €11, 35 minutes, 30 daily

Route des Vins destinations from Colmar include Dambach-la-Ville (€5.50) and Obernai (€7.50), both of which require a change of trains at Sélestat (€4.50, 11 minutes, 30 daily).

About 20 daily autorails or SNCF buses (10 daily on weekends) link Colmar with the Vallée de Munster towns of Munster (€3.50, 37 minutes) and Metzeral (€4.50, 50 minutes); the last run back, by bus, begins a bit after 9pm (7pm at weekends).



Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT For Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport (EuroAirport), take one of the frequent trains to St-Louis and catch an airport shuttle bus (€1, eight minutes, every 20 or 30 minutes).

BICYCLE Colmarvélo (place Rapp; per half-/full day €5/6, deposit €50) Municipal city bikes.

Cycles Geiswiller (4-6 bd du Champ de Mars; per half-/full day €6/11) Hybrid bikes for Route

des Vins touring; free helmets and cycling maps.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Free parking can be found on place Scheurer-Kestner just north of Musée d'Unterlinden; a few blocks east of the train station around the German-era, brick-built water tower; and in part of the car park at place de la Montagne Verte.

Massif des Vosges

The Vosges range is a little-known region of wooded heights, fragrant pastures, glacial lakes and dairy farms. For added seclusion, head away from the crowds and into the serene **Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges** (www.parc-ballons-vosges.fr), 3000 sq km of pristine greenery in the southern Vosges.

In summer, hang-gliders take to the skies, cyclists roll through pristine countryside and walkers can pick from 10,000km of marked paths, including GRs (*grandes randonnées*; long-distance hiking trails). When the snow settles, three dozen inexpensive skiing areas offer modest downhill and superb cross-country skiing.

VALLÉE DE MUNSTER

This river valley – its cow-nibbled pastures scattered with 16 quaint villages, its upper slopes thickly forested – is one of the loveliest in the Vosges. From the town of Metzeral, you can hike to Schnepfenried, Hohnneck, the Petit Ballon and Vallée de la Wormsa, which has a section of the GR5 and a trio of small lakes.

MUNSTER

POP 5080

Spread around gently rolling hills and famous for its notoriously smelly and eponymous cheese, streamside Munster, meaning 'monastery', is a relaxed base for exploring the valley (the GR531 passes by here).

About 20 storks live year-round in the **Enclos aux Cigognes** (chemin du Dubach; admission free; ☉24hr), and more hang out on top of it. It's 250m behind the Renaissance *hôtel de ville*; on foot, cross the creek and turn left.

Check out the **Cimes et Sentiers** (www.sentiersrando.com, in French) website for year-round walking and cycling tours of the Vosges and, in winter, snowshoe hikes.

Based 200m east of the tourist office, **Cycle Hop Evasion** (5 rue de la République; bike rental per day €14-18; ☉9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) rents out mountain bikes, arrang-

HOLY CHEESE

Rich, white and creamy, with a pungent, earthy aroma when ripe and a mild flavour when fresh, Munster cheese has been made to the time-honoured methods of the Benedictine monks since the 7th century in this valley. Only the milk of the cows that lazily graze the Vosges' highest pastures is good enough for this semisoft cheese, delicious with cumin seeds, rye bread and a glass of spicy Gewürztraminer. See the tourist office website (www.la-vallee-de-munster.com) for details on dairy farms where you can taste, buy and see Munster in the making.

es guides and provides details on cycling routes.

Corinne and Dany extend a warm welcome the lemon-fronted **Hôtel Deybach** (☎03 89 77 32 71; www.hotel-deybach.com; 4 chemin du Badischhof; s/d €43/56). The fresh, simple rooms have town or country views, and there's a flowery garden for relaxing moments.

Skip dinner and go straight for dessert at **Salon de Thé Gilg** (11 Grand' Rue; cakes & pastries €2-5; ☉closed Sun afternoon, Mon), a tea room famous for its delectable *kougelhoppf*, petits fours and pastries. Keep an eye out for storks' nests at the **food market** (place du Marché; ☉Tue & Sat mornings). Grand' Rue has a handful of restaurants rustling up Alsatian fare and pizza.

i Information

Maison du Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges (www.parc-ballons-vosges.fr, in French; 1 cour de l'Abbaye; ☉10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) The regional park's visitors centre has ample information in English. To get there, walk through the arch from place du Marché.

Tourist office (☎03 89 77 31 80; www.la-vallee-de-munster.com; 1 rue du Couvent; ☉9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sat) Information on the Munster valley, including visits to cheesemakers. Sells hiking maps and *topoguides* in French. In the same building as the Maison du Parc but downstairs.

ROUTE DES CRÊTES

Partly built during WWI to supply French frontline troops, the **Route des Crêtes** (Route of the Crests) takes you to the





2



4



3

1. Strasbourg's cathedral (p303)

Cathédrale Notre-Dame is a Gothic marvel of stonework, stained-glass, spires and gargoyles.

2. Petite Venise, Colmar (p323)

Colmar's 'Little Venice' quarter, with its canals and half-timbered houses, is a main attraction.

3. Centre Pompidou-Metz (p339)

The Pompidou-Metz' sleek architecture has created as much buzz as its modern-art exhibits.

4. Place Stanislas, Nancy (p335)

Nancy's neoclassical square is a Unesco World Heritage Site.

Vosges' highest *ballons* (bald, rounded mountain peaks) and to several WWI sites. Mountaintop lookouts afford spectacular views of the Alsace plain, the Black Forest across the Rhine in Germany and – on clear days – the Alps and Mont Blanc.

The route links **Col du Bonhomme** (949m), about 20km west of Kayersberg, with Cernay, 15km west of Mulhouse, along the D148, D61, D430 and D431. Sections around **Col de la Schlucht** (1139m) are closed from the first big snow until about April.

From Col de la Schlucht, home to a small ski station, trails head off in various directions; walking north along the GR5 brings you to three pristine lakes: **Lac Vert**, **Lac Noir** and **Lac Blanc** (Green, Black and White Lakes).

At the dramatic, wind-buffed summit of 1424m **Grand Ballon**, the highest point in the Vosges, a short trail takes you to an aircraft-radar ball and a weather station.

BALLON D'ALSACE

Three *régions* (Alsace, Franche-Comté and Lorraine) converge at the rounded 1247m-high summit of **Ballon d'Alsace**, 20km southwest of Grand Ballon as the crow flies (by road, take the D465 from St-Maurice). Between 1871 and WWI, the frontier between France and Germany passed by here, attracting French tourists eager to glimpse France's 'lost province' of Alsace from the heroic equestrian statue of **Joan of Arc** and the cast-iron **orientation table**. During WWI the mountaintop was heavily fortified, but the trenches were never used in battle.

Ballon d'Alsace is a scenic base for walking in summer; the GR5 passes through, as do other trails, including those heading to the bottle-green **Lac des Perches** (four hours). There's cross-country skiing on well-groomed forest tracks in winter.

Mulhouse

POP 113,130

The dynamic industrial city of Mulhouse (pronounced 'moo-looze'), 43km south of Colmar, was allied with nearby Switzerland before voting to join Revolutionary France in 1798. Largely rebuilt after the ravages of WWII, it has little of the quaint Alsatian charm that you find further north, but the city's world-class industrial museums are well worth a stop.



Sights

Cité de l'Automobile

CAR MUSEUM

(www.collection-schlumpf.com; 192 av de Colmar; adult/child €10.50/8; ☎10am-6pm; 🚗) An ode to the automobile, the striking glass-and-steel museum showcases 400 rare and classic motors from old-timers like the Bugatti Royale to Formula 1 dream machines. There's a kiddie corner for would-be mechanics. By car, hop off the A36 at the Mulhouse Centre exit.

Cité du Train

RAILWAY MUSEUM

(www.citedutrain.com; 2 rue Alfred de Glehn; adult/child €10/7.50, incl Cité de l'Automobile €17.50/12.50; ☎10am-6pm) Trainspotters are in their element at Europe's largest railway museum, displaying SNCF's prized collection of locomotives and carriages. Take bus 20 from the train station or, if driving, the Mulhouse-Dornach exit on the A35.

Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes

FABRIC MUSEUM

(Museum of Textile Printing; www.musee-impression.com; 14 rue Jean-Jacques Henner; adult/child €7/3; ☎10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) Once known as the 'French Manchester', Mulhouse is fittingly home to this peerless collection of six million textile samples – from brilliant cashmeres to intricate silk screens – which make it a mecca for fabric designers. It's one long block northeast of the train station.

Musée du Papier Peint

WALLPAPER MUSEUM

(www.museepapierpeint.org; 28 rue Zuber, Rixheim; adult/child €6.50/5; ☎10am-noon & 2-6pm) More stimulating than it sounds, this is a treasure-trove of wallpaper (some of the scenic stuff is as detailed as an oil painting) and the machines used to produce it since the 18th century. To reach it, take bus 18 from the train station to Temple stop, or the Rixheim exit on the A36.



Sleeping & Eating

Le Strasbourg Hotel

HOTEL €

(☎03 89 36 54 70; www.hotel-le-strasbourg.com; 17 av de Colmar; s/d €50/60) A five-minute stroll north of the main square, this tastefully converted 19th-century town house has large, bright and airy rooms. Free parking is a boon.

Le Petit Zinc

ALSATIAN €€

(☎03 89 46 36 78; 15 rue des Bons Enfants; mains €11-17; ☎closed Sun; 🍷) Old black-and-white snapshots, coffee mills and a polished wood-

en bar give this art deco bistro a nostalgic air. Pull up a chair for Alsatian classics like *baeckeoffe* and pork cheeks braised in pinot noir.

i Information

Tourist office (☎03 89 66 93 13; www.tourism-mulhouse.com; place de la Réunion; ☺10am-6pm, closed noon-2pm Sun) Located in the 16th-century, *trompe l'œil*-covered former *hôtel de ville*, about 700m northwest of the train station.

i Getting There & Around

TRAIN France's second train line, linking Mulhouse with Thann, opened in 1839. The **train station** (10 av du Général Leclerc) is just south of the centre. Trains run at least hourly to the following:

Basel €6.50, 23 minutes

Colmar €7.50, 17 minutes

St-Louis €5, 14 minutes

Strasbourg €15, 52 minutes

Around Mulhouse

 **Écomusée d'Alsace** (www.ecomusee-alsace.fr, in French; Ungersheim; adult/child €13/9; ☺10am-6pm) is great for keeping little minds active. France's so-called biggest 'living museum' is a fascinating excursion into Alsatian country life and time-honoured crafts. Smiths, cartwrights, potters and coopers do their thing in and among 70 historic Alsatian farmhouses – a veritable village – brought here and meticulously reconstructed for preservation (and so storks can

build nests on them). The Écomusée is in Ungersheim, 17km northwest of Mulhouse (off the A35 to Colmar).



Bioscope (www.lebioscope.com, in French; adult/child €13/9; ☺10am-6pm)

makes learning about the environment fun. Tots are kept on their toes at this eco-conscious theme park with hands-on activities, including a virtual journey to the depths of the South Pacific, a recycling-focused labyrinth and the Macroscope garden where everything (roots, apple trees etc) seems larger than life. It's situated 5km by road northeast from the Écomusée.

LORRAINE

Lorraine, between the plains and vines of Champagne and the Massif des Vosges, is fed by the Meurthe, Moselle and Meuse Rivers – hence the names of three of its four *départements* (the fourth is Vosges).

History

Lorraine got its name *Lotharii regnum* (Lothair's kingdom) in the 9th century when it came to be ruled by the Frankish king Lothair II. The area became part of France in 1766 upon the death of Stanisław Leszczyński, the deposed king of Poland who ruled Lorraine as duke in the middle decades of the 18th century. In 1871 the Moselle *département* (along with Alsace) was annexed by Germany and remained part of the Second Reich until 1918, which is why much of Metz feels so imperial while Nancy, which remained French, is so stylishly Gallic. The two cities are rivals to this day.

i Getting There & Away

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Metz is on the A4, which links Paris and Reims with Strasbourg. Both links Paris and Metz are on the A31 from Dijon to Luxembourg.

TRAIN The new TGV Est Européen line has significantly reduced travel times from Paris – Metz and Nancy are now just 80 and 90 minutes from the capital, respectively.

Nancy

POP 107,250

Delightful Nancy has an air of refinement found nowhere else in Lorraine. With its resplendent central square, fine museums, formal gardens and shop windows sparkling with Daum and Baccarat crystal, the former capital of the dukes of Lorraine catapults

WORTH A TRIP

A ROOM AT THE TOP

Built all in wood in 1922 and run by the Club Vosgien, the region's hiking organisation, the **Chalet Hôtel du Grand Ballon** (☎03 89 48 77 99; www.chalethotel-grandballon.com, in French; s/d €31/56, menus €15-27; ☺) sits atop Grand Ballon in splendid isolation, amid a web of hiking and cycling trails. The rooms are spartan but with scenery this breathtaking you won't be spending much time inside. The Alsatian restaurant is perfect for hearty après-hike dining. By car it's 17km up the hill from Willer-sur-Thur (the road is open year-round), northwest of Mulhouse.



you back to the opulence of the 18th century, when much of the city centre was built.

Nancy has long thrived on a combination of innovation and sophistication. The art nouveau movement flourished here (as the Nancy School) thanks to the rebellious spirit of local artists, who set out to prove that everyday objects could be drop-dead gorgeous.

Sights

Place Stanislas

CITY SQUARE

Laid out in the 1750s, this neoclassical square is one of France's grandest public spaces and a Unesco World Heritage Site. Designed by Emmanuel Héré, it was named after the enlightened, Polish-born Duke of Lorraine who commissioned it, and whose statue stands in the middle. Your gaze will be drawn to a cluster of opulent buildings, including the **hôtel de ville** and the sublime **Opéra National de Lorraine**, as well as gilded wrought-iron gateways by Jean Lamour and rococo fountains by Guibal.

Musée des Beaux-Arts

ART MUSEUM

(3 place Stanislas; adult/child €6/free; ☺10am-6pm Wed-Mon) Daum-made art nouveau glass and a rich selection of paintings from the 14th to 21st centuries are among the star exhibits at this outstanding museum. Caravaggio, Rubens, Picasso and Monet

masterpieces hang alongside works by Lorraine-born artists, such as Claude Lorrain's dreamlike baroque landscapes.

Musée de l'École de Nancy

ART MUSEUM

(School of Nancy Museum; www.ecole-de-nancy.com; 36-38 rue du Sergent Blandan; adult/child €6/4; ☺10am-6pm Wed-Sun) A highlight of a visit to Nancy, the Musée de l'École de Nancy brings together an exquisite collection of art nouveau interiors, curvaceous glass and landscaped gardens. It's housed in a 19th-century villa about 2km southwest of the centre; to get there take bus 122 or 123 to the Nancy Thermal or Paul-Painlevé stop.

Musée Lorrain

REGIONAL MUSEUM

(64 & 66 Grande Rue; adult/child for both sections €5.50/3.50; ☺10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) Once home to the dukes of Lorraine, the regal Renaissance Palais Ducal now shelters the Musée Lorrain. The rich **fine arts & history collection** spotlights medieval statuary, engravings and lustrous faience (glazed pottery). The **regional art & folklore collection** occupies a 15th-century former Franciscan monastery. Inside, the Gothic **Église des Cordeliers** and the 17th-century **Chapelle Ducale**, modelled on the Medici Chapel in Florence, served as the burial place of the dukes of Lorraine.

Nancy

Top Sights

Musée des Beaux-Arts	C3
Musée Lorrain (Fine Arts & History)	B2
Musée Lorrain (Regional Art & Folklore)	B1
Place de l'Alliance	D3
Place Stanislas	C4

Sights

1 Arc de Triomphe	C3
Brasserie Excelsior	(see 10)
2 Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-l'Annonciation	D5
3 Hôtel de Ville	C4
4 Opéra National de Lorraine	D3
5 Parc de la Pépinière	D1
6 Place de la Carrière	C2

Sleeping

7 Hôtel de Guise	B2
8 Hôtel des Prélats	D4

Eating

9 Aux Délices du Palais	B2
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10 Brasserie Excelsior	A5
Chez Tony	(see 11)
11 Marché Couvert	C5
12 La Bouche à L'Oreille	C5
13 Chez Tanésy – Le Gastrolâtre	C2
14 Monoprix	C6

Drinking

15 Le Ch'timi	B2
16 Le P'ti K	B4
Le Varadero	(see 13)

Entertainment

17 Café Théâtre le Vertigo	B5
18 Fnac Billeterie	A5
Opéra National de Lorraine	(see 4)

Shopping

19 Baccarat	C4
20 Daum	C3
21 Lefèvre-Lemoine	A5
22 Maison des Sœurs Macarons	C4

Place de l'Alliance

CITY SQUARE

A block to the east of place Stanislas, this lime-tree-fringed square, also World Heritage material, is graced by a **baroque fountain** by Bruges-born Louis Cyfflé (1724–1806), inspired by Bernini's *Four Rivers* fountain in Rome's Piazza Navona.

Place de la Carrière

CITY SQUARE

Adjoining place Stanislas – on the other side of Nancy's own **Arc de Triomphe**, built in the mid-1750s to honour Louis XV – is this quiet square. Once a riding and jousting arena, it is now graced by four rows of linden trees and stately rococo gates in gilded wrought iron.

Vieille Ville

OLD TOWN

A saunter through the charming old town takes in the silver-turreted, 14th-century Porte de la Craffe, Nancy's oldest city gate, and place St-Epvre, dominated by ornate neo-Gothic Basilique St-Epvre.

Parc de la Pépinière

PARK

On a hot summer's day, escape the crowds in this formal garden, with ornamental fountains, a rose garden and a Rodin sculpture of baroque landscape painter Claude Lorrain.

Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-l'Annonciation

CATHEDRAL

(place Monseigneur Ruch) Crowned by a frescoed dome, Nancy's 18th-century cathedral is a sombre mixture of neoclassical and baroque.



Tours

The tourist office offers multilingual audio-guide tours (€6) of the historic centre (two

hours) and the art nouveau quarters (up to three or four hours), or download a free MP3 tour online (www.ot-nancy.fr).



Festivals & Events

Get your groove on to live jazz, blues and Latin at the 10-day **Jazz Pulsations** (www.nancyjazzpulsations.com) in October. December brings twinkle, carols and handicrafts to the **Marché de Noël** (Christmas Market) on place André Maginot.



Sleeping

Characterful midrange hotels are Nancy's forte; budget places tend to be either complete dives or anonymous chains. The tourist office can give you a list of *chambres d'hôte* – expect to pay €60 to €80 for a double.



Hôtel des Prélats

HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(☎03 83 30 20 20; www.hoteldesprelats.com; 56 place Monseigneur Ruch; s & d €69/109; 🚗🚶) It's not every day you get to sleep in a former 17th-century bishop's palace right next to the cathedral. This elegant hotel plays up the romance in rooms with stained-glass windows, four-poster beds and shimmery drapes. Service is as polished as the surrounds.

Hôtel de Guise

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎03 83 32 24 68; www.hoteldeguise.com; 18 rue de Guise; s €63, d €75-100; 🚗🚶) Boutique chic meets 17th-century elegance at this hotel, tucked down an old-town backstreet. A wrought-iron staircase sweeps up to old-fashioned rooms, with antique furnishings, inlaid parquet and heavy drapes. There's a walled garden for quiet moments.

La Résidence

TRADITIONAL HOTEL €€

(☎03 83 35 42 34; www.hotel-laresidence-nancy.fr, in French; 30 bd Jean-Jaurès; r €70-85; 🚗🚶 place Centrale) This convivial hotel is one of Nancy's best deals, with an inviting salon and a leafy courtyard for alfresco breakfasts. The snappy new rooms have ultra-modern bathrooms and flatscreen TVs.

Suitehotel Nancy

APARTHOTEL €€

(☎03 83 32 28 80; www.suitehotel.com; 2 allée du Chanoine Drioton; r €110; 🚗🚶🚶🚶 St-George) Prettily set in gardens, this streamlined hotel has spacious, modern apartments with kitchenettes, and a 24-hour gym. Book online at least three weeks ahead for a discount of up to 40%.



CULTURE CENT-SAVER

The good-value **Pass Nancy Trois Musées** (€10), valid for three months, gets you into the Musée de l'École de Nancy, the Musée Lorrain and the Musée des Beaux-Arts, and is sold at each museum.

The **City Pass Nancy Culture** (€9), sold at the tourist office, includes an audioguide tour of the city, a bus or tram return trip and a cinema ticket, plus discounts on museums and bike rental. From May to October, the **City Pass Nancy Loisirs** (€13) bestows a few additional benefits.

ART NOUVEAU TRAIL

In 1900, glassmaker and ceramist Émile Gallé founded the École de Nancy, one of France's leading art nouveau movements, joining creative forces with masters of decorative arts and architecture such as Jacques Gruber, Louis Majorelle and the Daum brothers. Banks, villas, pharmacies, brasseries – wherever you wander in Nancy, you are bound to stumble across their handiwork, from sinuous grillwork to curvaceous stained-glass windows and doorways that are a profusion of naturalistic ornament.

Slip back to this genteel era by picking up the free *Art Nouveau Itineraries* brochure and map at the tourist office, covering four city strolls. Lucien Weissenburger's 1910 **Brasserie Excelsior** and the 1908 **Chambre de Commerce** with wrought-iron by Louis Majorelle, both located on rue Henri Poincaré, are central standouts. Close to the Musée de l'École de Nancy lies the whimsical **Villa Majorelle** (1 rue Louis-Majorelle; adult/child €3.50/2.50; ☺guided tours 2.30pm & 3.45pm Sat & Sun), built by Henri Sauvage in 1901 and bearing the hallmark of Majorelle (furniture) and Gruber (stained glass). The centrepiece is Les Blés dining room with its vinelike stone fireplace.



Eating

Foodie rue des Maréchaux, just west of the Arc de Triomphe, dishes up everything from French to Italian, tapas, seafood, Indian and Japanese. Grande Rue is peppered with intimate bistros.

Brasserie Excelsior

BRASSERIE €€

(☎03 83 35 24 57; 50 rue Henri Poincaré; menus €23-38; ☺8am-12.30am Mon-Sat, 8am-11pm Sun) As opulent as a Fabergé egg with its stucco and stained glass, Excelsior whisks you back to the decadent era of art nouveau. Brusquely efficient waiters bring brasserie classics such as oysters (in the R months), juicy steaks and banquet-like seafood platters to the table.

Chez Tony

GOURMET FOOD €

(Marché Couvert; plat du jour €6, antipasti €7-11; ☺Tue-Sat) Generously heaped plates of antipasti, freshly made pasta, colourful garden chairs, big smiles all round – it's a Tuscan garden party every lunchtime at Chez Tony in Nancy's covered market. Toast your find with a glass of olive liqueur or Chianti.

Aux Délices du Palais

BISTRO €€

(☎03 83 30 44 19; 69 Grande Rue; starters/mains/desserts €5/9/5; ☺Mon-Fri & dinner Sat) Purple walls and glitter balls, this shabby-chic bistro serves whatever the jovial chef fancies cooking – from flavoursome tagines to fajitas. Great value, so it's no wonder it has an enthusiastic local following.

Chez Tanésy – Le Gastrolâtre

BISTRO €€

(☎03 83 35 51 94; 23 Grande Rue; menus €27-44; ☺Tue-Sat) A 16th-century town house has been transformed into this homey, intimate bistro specialising in mouth-watering Lor-

raine- and Provence-inspired cuisine, including fowl.

La Bouche à L'Oreille

BISTRO €€

(☎03 83 35 17 17; 42 rue des Carmes; lunch menus/fondues €12/15; ☺lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Chandeliers and flowery wallpaper give this bistro the feel of an overgrown doll's house. The menu places an emphasis on cheese, from creative salads to *raclette* and fondues. Service can be sloooow.

Self-Catering

Marché Couvert

FOOD MARKET

(place Henri Mengin; ☺7am-7pm Tue-Sat) A fresh-produce feast for the picnic basket.

Monoprix

SUPERMARKET

(rue des Ponts) Deep inside the St-Sébastien shopping mall.



Drinking

Nancy's buoyant nightlife concentrates on bar-dotted Grande Rue, the spectacularly illuminated place Stanislas and laid-back place de St-Epvre in the Vieille Ville, the best spot for sundowners.

Le Ch'timi

BAR

(17 place St-Epvre; ☺9am-2am Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun) On three brick-and-stone levels, Le Ch'timi is *the* place to go for beer. It's a beloved haunt of students who come for the 150 brewskies, 16 of them on tap.

Le Varadero

BAR

(27 Grande Rue; ☺Tue-Sat) Cuba it isn't, but this trendy bar still gets the good vibes flowing with live Latin and jazz on the terrace in summer. DJs hit the turntables at the weekend.

Le P'ti K

BAR

(7 place Carnot) A sleeky interior and prime people-watching terrace on place Carnot make this a great spot for an *apéro* (aperitif).

**Entertainment**

Details on cultural events appear in French in *Spectacles* (www.spectacles-publications.com) and *Nancy by Night* (www.nancybynight.com). Tickets are available at **Fnac Billetterie** (www.fnacspectacles.com; 2nd fl, 2 av Foch; ☎10am-7pm Mon-Sat).

Opéra National de Lorraine

OPERA HOUSE

(☎03 83 85 33 11; www.opera-national-lorraine.fr, in French; 1 rue Ste-Catherine) A harmonious blend of neoclassical and art nouveau styles, this is Nancy's lavish stage for opera and classical music. The resident orchestra perform at *concerts apéritifs* (€5), held one Saturday a month.

Café Théâtre le Vertigo

THEATRE

(☎03 83 32 71 97; www.levertigo.fr, in French; 29 rue de la Visitation; ☎Tue-Sat) Go boho at this superb café-theatre, decked out with red velvet banquettes and black-and-white tiles. The eclectic line-up skips from improvised theatre to stand-up comedy and gigs.

**Shopping**

Nancy's grand thoroughfares are rue St-Dizier, rue St-Jean and rue St-Georges. Grande Rue is studded with idiosyncratic galleries and antique shops.

**Lefèvre-Lemoine**

CONFECTIONERY

(47 rue Henri Poincaré; ☎8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) Ahhh, they just don't make sweetshops like this 1840s treasure anymore. A bird chirps a welcome as you enter this world of sugar-coated nostalgia. One of the old-fashioned sweet tins made a cameo appearance in the film *Amélie*. *Bergamotes de Nancy* (boiled sweets made with bergamot, the citrus fruit that flavours Earl Grey tea), caramels, glazed mirabelles (plums) – decisions, decisions...

Maison des Sœurs Macarons

MACAROONS

(www.macaron-de-nancy.com; 21 rue Gambetta; ☎closed Mon morning, Sun) When Nancy's Benedictine nuns hit hard times during the French Revolution, they saw the light in heavenly macaroons. They're still made to the original recipe (egg whites, sugar, Provençal almonds) at this old-world confectioner. A dozen box (€7) makes a great gift.

Baccarat

CRYSTAL

(www.baccarat.fr, in French; 2 rue des Dominicains; ☎closed Mon morning, Sun) Shop like royalty (or window-shop like mere mortals) for exquisite crystal and jewellery here, where the simplest ring – impossibly delicate – goes for €150.

Daum

CRYSTAL

(14 place Stanislas; ☎closed Mon morning, Sun) At Daum's flagship shop you can admire limited-edition crystal knick-knacks and jewellery, often with a naturalistic theme.

**Information**

Copycom (3 rue Guerrier de Dumast; per hr €2; ☎9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 3-8pm Sun) Internet access.

E-café Cyber Café (11 rue des Quatre Églises; per hr €5.50; ☎11am-9pm Mon & Sat, 9am-9pm Tue-Fri) A proper café whose computers have webcams.

Post office (10 rue St-Dizier) Has currency exchange.

Tourist office (☎03 83 35 22 41; www.ot-nancy.fr; place Stanislas; ☎9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Inside the *hôtel de ville*. Free brochures detailing walking tours of the city centre and art nouveau architecture.

**Getting There & Away**

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Rental options:

Europcar (www.eurocar.com; 18 rue de Serre)

National-Citer (www.citer.fr, in French; train station departure hall)

TRAIN The **train station** (place Thiers), spruced up for the arrival of the TGV Est Européen, is on the line linking Paris with Strasbourg. Destinations include the following:

Baccarat €9.50, 45 minutes, 15 daily

Metz €9.50, 40 minutes, 48 daily

Paris Gare de l'Est; €54, 1½ hours, 11 daily

Strasbourg €22, 1½ hours, 12 daily


**Getting Around**

BICYCLE Nancy is easy to navigate by bicycle.

Vélostan (www.velostan.com, in French; per half-day/full day/week €3/5/10) has rental sites inside the **train station** (☎7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm weekends) and near the Musée de l'École de Nancy in **Espace Thermal** (43bis rue du Sergent Blandan; ☎10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE There's free parking along the canalside quai Ste-Catherine, 300m east of place Stanislas, and on some side streets

in the working-class neighbourhoods west of the train tracks.

TRAM The local public transport company, **STAN** (www.reseau-stan.com, in French; office 3 rue du Docteur Schmitt; ☎7am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) has its main transfer points at Nancy République and Point Central. One/10 tickets cost €1.30/8.50. The  icon shows the nearest tram stop for places off the map in this section.

Baccarat

POP 4730

The glitzy Baccarat *cristallerie* (crystal glassworks), founded in 1764, is 60km southeast of Nancy. The **Musée Baccarat** (www.baccarat.fr, in French; 2 rue des Cristalleries; adult/child €2.50/free; ☎9am-noon & 2-6pm) displays 1100 exquisite pieces of handmade lead crystal. The boutique out front is almost as dazzling as the museum. Nearby crystal shops sell lesser, though more affordable, brands.

On the opposite bank of the park-lined River Meurthe, the dark concrete sanctuary of **Église St-Rémy** (☎8am-5pm), built in the mid-1950s, is austere on the outside and kaleidoscopic on the inside – dramatically lit by 20,000 Baccarat crystal panels.

The **tourist office** (☎03 83 75 13 37; www.ot-baccarat.fr; 11 rue Division Leclerc; ☎9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat), a bit north of the Musée Baccarat, has hiking maps.

Trains run from Baccarat to Nancy (€9.50, 45 minutes, 15 daily). By car, Baccarat makes an easy stop on the way from Nancy to Colmar via the Vosges' Col du Bonhomme.

Metz

POP 125,720

Sitting astride the confluence of the Moselle and Seille rivers, Lorraine's graceful capital Metz (pronounced 'mess') is ready to be fêted. Though the city's Gothic marvel of a cathedral, superlative art collections and Michelin star-studded dining scene long managed to sidestep the world spotlight, that all changed with the show-stopping arrival of Centre Pompidou-Metz. Yet the Pompidou is but the prelude to Metz' other charms: buzzy pavement cafés and shady riverside parks, a beautiful old town built from yellow Jeumont stone and a regal Quartier Impérial up for Unesco World Heritage status. Suddenly, everyone's talking about Metz, and rightly so.

Sights

Cathédrale St-Étienne

CATHEDRAL

(place St-Étienne; ☎8am-6pm) As delicate as Chantilly lace, the golden spires of this Gothic cathedral crown Metz' skyline. Exquisitely lit by kaleidoscopic curtains of 13th- to 20th-century stained glass, the cathedral is nicknamed 'God's lantern'. The **Gothic windows**, on the north transept arm, contrast with the **Renaissance windows** on the south transept arm.

Notice the flamboyant **Chagall windows** in reds, yellows and blues in the ambulatory, which also harbours the **treasury** (adult/child €2/1; ☎10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm). The sculpture of the **Graouilly** ('grau-lee'), a dragon said to have terrified pre-Christian Metz, lurks in the 15th-century **crypt** (adult/child €2/1; ☎10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm). The cathedral looks its most radiant on a bright day and when floodlit in the evening.

Centre Pompidou-Metz

GALLERY

(www.centrepompidou-metz.fr; 1 parvis des Droits de l'Homme; adult/child €7/free; ☎11am-6pm Mon, Wed & Sun, 11am-8pm Thu-Sat) Opened in May 2010 to much fanfare, the architecturally innovative Centre Pompidou-Metz is the satellite branch of Paris' Centre Pompidou and the new star of the city's art scene. The gallery draws on Europe's largest collection of modern art to stage ambitious temporary exhibitions, such as the inaugural *Chefs d'oeuvre* (Masterpieces), which presented standouts by Picasso, Matisse and Kandinsky. The dynamic space also hosts top-drawer cultural events.

Musée La Cour d'Or

HISTORY MUSEUM

(2 rue du Haut Poirier; adult/child €4.60/free; ☎9am-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) Delve into the past at this trove of Gallo-Roman antiquities, hiding remnants of the city's Roman baths and a statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis unearthed right here in Metz. Your visit continues with art from the Middle Ages, paintings from the 15th century onwards, and artefacts revealing the history of Metz' ancient Jewish community. A room-by-room brochure in English is available.

Quartier Impérial

HISTORIC QUARTER

The stately boulevards and bourgeois villas of the German Imperial Quarter, including rue Gambetta and av Foch, are the brainchild of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Built to trumpet the triumph of Metz' post-1871 status as



Metz

Top Sights

Cathédrale St-Étienne	C2
Centre Pompidou-Metz	D7
Musée La Cour d'Or	D2
Quartier Impérial	C6

Sights

1 Arsenal	B5
2 Chapelle des Templiers	A5
3 Église St-Pierre-aux-Nonains	A4
4 Palais de Justice	B3
5 Pedal Boat & Rowboat Hire	A3
6 Riverside Park	A4
7 Statue of Marshall Ney	B4
8 Temple Neuf	B2
9 Théâtre	B2

Sleeping

10 Cécil Hôtel	B7
11 Grand Hôtel de Metz	C3
12 Hôtel de la Cathédrale	C2
13 Hôtel Escorial	B7
14 Hôtel Métropole	C6
15 La Citadelle	A5

Eating

Chez Mauricette	(see 16)
16 Marché Couvert	C2
La Baraka	(see 12)
17 La Crêperie	B2
18 La Voile Blanche	D7
Le Magasin aux Vivres	(see 15)
19 Maire	B2
20 Pâtisserie Claude Bourguignon	C4
21 Restaurant Thierry	C2
Soupes à Soups	(see 16)

Drinking

22 Bar Latino	C4
23 Café Jehanne d'Arc	D2
24 L'Appart	B3
25 Le Strapontin	C2
26 Pop White	C3

Entertainment

Arsenal	(see 1)
27 Fnac Billetterie	C3
28 Les Trinitaires	D2

part of the Second Reich, the architecture is a whimsical mix of art deco, neo-Romanesque and neo-Renaissance influences. The area's unique ensemble of Wilhelmian architecture has made it a candidate for Unesco World Heritage status.

Philippe Starck lampposts juxtapose Teutonic sculptures, whose common theme is German imperial might, at the monumental Rhenish neo-Romanesque **train station**, completed in 1908.

The massive **main post office**, built in 1911 of red Vosges sandstone, is as solid and heavy as the cathedral is light and lacy.

Place de la Comédie

CITY SQUARE

Bounded by one of the channels of the Moselle, this neoclassical square is home to the city's 18th-century **Théâtre**, France's oldest theatre still in use. During the Revolution, place de l'Égalité (as it was then known) was the site of a guillotine that lopped the heads off 63 'enemies of the people'.

The neo-Romanesque **Temple Neuf** (Protestant Church; ☺ only during services) was constructed under the Germans in 1904.

Esplanade

SIGNIFICANT AREA

The formal flowerbeds of the Esplanade – and its statue of a gallant-looking **Marshall**

Ney – are flanked by imposing buildings, including the **Arsenal** cultural centre and the sober, neoclassical **Palais de Justice**.

Originally built around 380 as part of a Gallo-Roman spa complex, **Église St-Pierre-aux-Nonains** (☺ 1-6pm Tue-Sat & 2-6pm Sun) sidles up to the octagonal, 13th-century **Chapelle des Templiers** (Chapel of the Knights Templar), the only one of its kind in Lorraine.

Place St-Louis

CITY SQUARE

On the eastern edge of the city centre, triangular place St-Louis is surrounded by medieval arcades and merchants' houses dating from the 14th to 16th centuries.

Riverside Park

PARK

(quai des Régates) In summer, **pedal boats and rowboats** can be rented on quai des Régates. The promenade leads through a leafy riverside park, with statues, ponds, swans and a fountain. It's the ideal picnic spot.

Tours

The tourist office's audioguides (€5), available in three languages (English, French and German), cover the city centre (1½ hours) and the Quartier Impérial (45 minutes).

THE RISE AND RISE OF THE POMPIDOU

Finally, it's here. Seven years and €60.7 million in the making, the Centre Pompidou-Metz is redefining the city's up-and-coming Quartier de l'Amphithéâtre and creating a wave of excitement in the art world. It has been likened to Bilbao's Guggenheim and London's Tate Modern, but one look at the tour de force of architects Shigeru Ban (Tokyo) and Jean de Gastines (France) tells you it is nothing of the sort – it is unique.

Unlike its Parisian predecessor, famed for its inside-out scaffolding and multicoloured pipe entrails, Centre Pompidou-Metz is white and sinuous, with trunklike columns that grow towards a roof resembling a gliding manta ray. The translucent membrane allows light to flood exhibition spaces by day and glows ethereally after dark. A dynamic, flexible space for dynamic, flexible exhibitions, Pompidou two has proven that there is life beyond the capital for art lovers in France.

Festivals & Events

Sweet and juicy, the humble mirabelle (plum) has its day at the **Fête de la Mirabelle** in August. Shop for stocking fillers at the illuminated **Marché de Noël** (www.noel-a-metz.com) in December.

Sleeping

Metz' hotels are fantastic value. Except in summer, they're fullest Monday to Thursday.

Péniche Alclair HOUSEBOAT €

(03 67 67 16 18; www.chambre-spenichemetz.com; allée St-Symphorien; r incl breakfast €65; ☺) What a clever idea: Cécile and Xavier Bonfils have transformed an old barge into this stylish blue houseboat, where lucky guests can stay in one of two bright rooms, with snazzy bathrooms and watery views. Breakfast is a generous spread of pastries, fresh bread and fruit salad, served in your room or on the sundeck. It's a pleasant 15-minute stroll south of the centre along the river.

Hôtel de la Cathédrale HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(03 87 75 00 02; www.hotelcathedrale-metz.fr; 25 place de Chambre; d €75-110; ☺) This classy little hotel occupies a 17th-century townhouse opposite the cathedral. Climb the wrought-iron staircase to your classically elegant room, with high ceilings, hardwood floors and antique trappings. Book well ahead for a cathedral view.

La Citadelle DESIGN HOTEL €€€

(03 87 17 17 17; www.citadelle-metz.com; 5 av Ney; d €205-265; ☺@) A 16th-century citadel given a boutique makeover, luxurious La Citadelle blends history with Zen-style sleekness. Monochrome hues and mood lighting define the vast, ultramodern rooms. The hotel's pride and joy is its Mi-

chelin-starred Le Magasin aux Vivres restaurant. Free parking is available.

Hôtel Métropole TRADITIONAL HOTEL €

(03 87 66 26 22; www.hotelmetropole-metz.com; 5 place du Général de Gaulle; s €52, d €58-63; ☺) Beat the crowds to the Centre Pompidou-Metz, five minutes' stroll away, by staying at this German Empire-style townhouse facing the train station. The cheery rooms feature above-par perks like free wifi and flatscreen TVs.

Hôtel Escorial SMALL HOTEL €€

(03 87 66 40 96; www.escorial-hotel.com; 18 rue Pasteur; s €64-76, d €72-84; ☺) Smooth contours and bold colours lend a modern air to this friendly hotel near the train station. The best of the large, spick-and-span rooms have balconies and city views.

Cécil Hôtel TRADITIONAL HOTEL €

(03 87 66 66 13; www.cecilhôtel-metz.com; 14 rue Pasteur; s €62-66, d €69-72; ☺) Built in 1920, this family-run hotel's smallish rooms are neat, petite and decorated in warm colours. Parking costs €9 per day.

Grand Hôtel de Metz HISTORIC HOTEL €€

(03 87 36 16 33; www.hotel-metz.com; 3 rue des Clercs; d €61-95; ☺) Not *quite* as grand as its name suggests (but rather nice nonetheless), this 18th-century hotel is just steps from the cathedral. The old-world rooms sport heavy drapes and wood furnishings.

Eating

Metz has scores of appetising restaurants, many along and near the river. Place St-Jacques becomes one giant open-air café when the sun's out. Cobble rue Taison and the arcades of place St-Louis shelter moderately priced bistros, pizzerias and cafés.

Restaurant Thierry

FUSION €€

(☎03 87 74 01 23; www.restaurant-thierry.fr; 5 rue des Piques; menus €24-34; ☺closed Wed & Sun) Walking into this spice-scented, lantern-lit restaurant is like stepping into the glammest of Marrakchi riads. An open fire crackles in the salon, where an aperitif works up an appetite for Asian- and Moroccan-inflected dishes, such as delicate prawn *nems* (spring rolls), seafood tagines and beautifully cooked sole with tempura. Often full, so call ahead if possible.

Le Magasin aux Vivres

GASTRONOMIC €€€

(☎03 87 17 17 17; 5 av Ney; mains €40-70; ☺closed Sat lunch, Sun & Mon) Conjuror of textures and seasonal flavours, Michelin-starred chef Christophe Dufossé makes creative use of local produce. Moselle wines work well with specialities like plump scallops sliding into a Lorraine beer emulsion and rack of Limousin lamb in spicy jus. Reservations are recommended.

La Voile Blanche

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎03 87 20 66 66; 1 parvis des Droits de l'Homme; menus €25-35; ☺closed dinner Sun, Tue; ♿) Art on a plate is the aim at Centre Pompidou-Metz' kaleidoscope-inspired restaurant, designed by architects Patrick Jouin and Sanjit Manku. The menu is fresh and seasonal – think summery Camargue rice with red mullet and succulent Charolais beef.

Maire

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €€

(☎03 87 32 43 12; www.restaurant-maire.com, in French; 1 rue des Ponts des Morts; menus €37-45; ☺closed Wed lunch, Tue) This smart riverside restaurant serves up moreish views of the cathedral from its window tables and veranda. With 500 bottles in the cellar, there's bound to be a wine that goes well with market-fresh dishes such as slow-cooked lamb and grilled pike-perch with spiced mirabelles.

La Crêperie

CRÊPES €

(11 rue de Faisan; crêpes €3.50-4, menus €9.50-15.50; ☺closed Sun, Thu) You can almost smell the briny Atlantic in this eccentric Breton crêperie, stuffed with nautical knick-knacks. Go sweet with crêpes or savoury with galettes topped with *fromage* or escargot. Hosts live Breton music once a week.

La Baraka

NORTH AFRICAN €

(☎03 87 36 33 92; 25 place de Chambre; mains €10-15; ☺closed Wed) Fancy a change? This unassuming North African place rustles up just-right tagines, meltingly tender lamb and couscous properly infused with saffron.

Pâtisserie Claude Bourguignon

TEAROOM €

(31 rue de la Tête d'Or; snacks €3-8; ☺Tue-Sat) Sticky éclairs, traditional Quiche Lorraine (with smoked bacon, no cheese) and *tarte aux mirabelles* (sweet plum tart)...wave bye-bye to the waistline and *bonjour* to happiness at this pâtisserie-tea room.

**Drinking**

Some 22,000 resident students keep Metz' vibe young and upbeat after dark. For an alfresco sundowner or two, try the open-air cafés on place de Chambre and place St-Jaques.

Café Jehanne d'Arc

CAFÉ

(place Jeanne d'Arc) Dating to the 13th-century, this watering hole oozes history from every fresco and beam. The soundtrack skips from Gainsbourg to classical, and there's often free live jazz. The terrace is a chilled spot for summertime imbibing.

L'Appart

BAR, CLUB

(www.l-endroit.com, in French; 2 rue Haute Pierre; ☺Wed-Sun) The house in which poet Paul Verlaine was born in 1844 is now a lively, mixed (gay and hetero) bar with a retro 1950s ceiling. Events move from DJ nights to drag shows. Industrial-style club L'Endroit spins house under the same roof.

DON'T MISS**GO TO MARKET**

If only every market were like Metz' grand **Marché Couvert** (Covered Market; place de la Cathédrale; ☺8am-6.30pm Tue-Sat). Once a bishop's palace, now a temple to fresh local produce, this is the kind of place where you pop in for a baguette and struggle out an hour later with bags overflowing with charcuterie, ripe fruit and five different sorts of *fromage*.

Make a morning of it, stopping for an early, inexpensive lunch and a chat with the market's larger-than-life characters. At **Chez Mauricette** (sandwiches €2-4.50, antipasti plate €5-7), Mauricette tempts with Lorraine goodies from herby *saucisson* to local charcuterie and mirabelle pâté.

Her neighbour is **Soupes à Soups** (soups €2.80-5.50), where Patrick laddles out homemade soups, from mushroom to creamy mushroom varieties.

Pop White

DESIGN BAR

(4 place St-Jacques) Decadently dark and silver-kissed, this vogueish lounge is a sundown favourite. Join a pre-clubbing crowd for drinks on the terrace before hitting the dance floor.

Le Strapontin

WINE BAR

(15 place de Chambre; ☺Tue-Sat) Jazzy beats, a cathedral-facing terrace and a neat selection of wines by the glass draw locals to this stylishly contemporary bar. All-comers are welcome at Thursday evening's salsa class.

Bar Latino

MUSIC BAR

(www.barlatino.fr, in French; 22 rue Dupont des Loges) This party-lovin' Latin bar swings with svelte bodies gyrating to salsa and jiving to rock 'n' roll. Zingy cocktails and Mexican food fuel the dancing.



Entertainment

Details on cultural events appear in free French-language monthlies like *Spectacles* (www.spectacles-publications.com) and *Ce Mois-Ci à Metz*, available at the tourist office.

Fnac Billetterie (www.fnacspectacles.com; Centre St-Jacques shopping mall; ☺10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-7.30pm Sat) sells events tickets.

Les Trinitaires

LIVE MUSIC

(www.lestrinitaires.com, in French; place Jeanne d'Arc) Post-rock, experimental rock and jazz bands take to the stage in the Gothic cellar and, in summer, the illuminated cloister of this soulful arts venue. Enjoy drinks before gigs at the Pop Art bar.

Arsenal

PERFORMING ARTS

(www.arsenal-metz.fr, in French; 3 av Ney; ☺Tue-Sun) Bearing the hallmark of Catalan post-modernist architect Ricardo Bofill, this striking Jeumont-stone building sits on the site of the former arsenal. It hosts dance, theatre and music performances.



Information

Bar St-Jacques (10 place St-Jacques; per hr €2; ☺7am-midnight) This bar has free wi-fi and two internet computers.

Diacom Internet Café (20 rue Gambetta; per hr €3; ☺9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-8pm Sun)

Hospital (1 place Philippe de Vigneulles; ☺24hr) The casualty ward is in Building F.

Police (10 rue Belle Isle; ☺24hr)

Post office (9 rue Gambetta) Has currency exchange.

Tourist office (☎03 87 55 53 76; http://tour-

isme.mairie-metz.fr; 2 place d'Armes; ☺9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) In a one-time guardroom built in the mid-1700s. Free walking-tour and cycling maps, free wi-fi and an internet terminal that works with a phonecard.



Getting There & Away

CAR & MOTORCYCLE Car rental companies with offices in the train station's arrival hall:

Avis (www.avis.com)

Europcar (www.europcar.com)

National-Citer (www.citer.fr, in French)

TRAIN Metz' ornate early 20th-century **train station** (pl du Général de Gaulle) has a super-sleek TGV linking Paris with Luxembourg. Direct trains include the following:

Luxembourg €14, 50 minutes, at least 15 daily

Paris Gare de l'Est; €53, 80 minutes, 13 daily

Nancy €9.50, 40 minutes, 48 daily

Strasbourg €23, 1¼ hours, 14 daily

Verdun €13, 1½ hours, three daily



Getting Around

BICYCLE Rent city and mountain bikes cheaply from **Mob Emploi** (www.mobemploi.fr, in French; per half-/full day/week €2/3/8, deposit per bike €100), a nonprofit place. Helmets and locks are free; rental options include kids' bikes, child carriers and even a tandem. There are two bureaux: rue d'Estrées (☺8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) and rue Vauban (☺5.45am-8pm Mon-Fri) at the base of the water tower just east of the train station.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE There's free parking near the train station on av Foch, northeast of the train station along bd André Maginot; and along bd Paixhans.

Fort du Hackenberg

The largest single Maginot Line bastion in the Metz area was the 1000-man **Fort du Hackenberg** (www.maginot-hackenberg.com; Veckring; adult/child €8/4; ☺tours in English 2pm Sat & Sun Apr-mid-Nov, 2pm Sat mid-Nov-March), 30km northeast of Metz, whose 10km of galleries were designed to be self-sufficient for three months and, in battle, to fire four tonnes of shells a minute. An electric trolley takes visitors along 4km of tunnels – always at 12°C – past subterranean installations. Tours last two hours.

Readers have been enthusiastic about the **tours** (www.maginot-line.com) of Fort du Hackenberg, other Maginot Line sites and Verdun led by Jean-Pascal Speck, an avid

amateur historian and owner of the romantic **Hôtel L'Horizon** (☎03 82 88 53 65; www.lhorizon.fr; 5 rte du Crève Coeur; d €98-150) in Thionville. If he's unavailable, he can put you in touch with other English-speaking guides.

Verdun

POP 20,170

They were once men in the prime of their lives, but had fallen for the possession of this hill. This hill, that was partly built on dead bodies already. A battle after which they lay rotting, fraternally united in death...

Georges Blond, Verdun

The unspeakable atrocities that took place in and around Verdun between 21 February and 18 December 1916, the longest battle of WWI, have turned the town's name into a byword for wartime slaughter and futile sacrifice.

Such a dark past means that Verdun always has an air of melancholy, even when the sun bounces brightly off the River Meuse and the town's shuttered houses. Go to the moonscape hills, scarred with trenches and shells; walk through the stony silence of the cemeteries as the morning mist rises, and you will understand why. Time has healed and trees have grown, but the memory of *l'enfer de Verdun* (the hell of Verdun) has survived. And, some say, may it never be forgotten.

History

After the annexation of Lorraine's Moselle *département* and Alsace by Germany in 1871, Verdun became a frontline outpost. Over the next four decades it was turned into the most important and heavily fortified element in France's eastern defence line.

During WWI Verdun itself was never taken by the Germans, but the evacuated town was almost totally destroyed by artillery bombardments. In the hills to the north and east of Verdun, the brutal combat – carried out with artillery, flamethrowers and poison gas – completely wiped out nine villages. During the last two years of WWI, more than 800,000 soldiers (some 400,000 French and almost as many Germans, along with thousands of the Americans who arrived in 1918) lost their lives in this area.



Sights

Citadelle Souterraine

CITADEL

(☎03 29 86 62 02; av du 5e RAP; adult/child €6/2.50; ☉9am-7pm, closed Jan) Central Verdun's biggest drawcard is this cavernous subterranean citadel, comprising 7km of underground galleries. Designed by the prolific Vauban in the 17th century and completed in 1838, in 1916 it was turned into an impregnable command centre in which 10,000 *poilus* (French WWI soldiers) lived, many waiting to be dispatched to the front.

About 10% of the galleries have been converted into an imaginative audiovisual re-enactment of the war, making this an excellent introduction to the WWI history of Verdun. Half-hour tours in battery-powered cars, available in six languages, should be booked ahead.

Centre Mondial de la Paix

MUSEUM

(World Centre for Peace; www.cmpaix.fr; place Monseigneur Ginisty; adult/child €5/2.50; ☉9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) Set in Verdun's handsomely classical former bishop's palace, built in 1724, this museum's permanent exhibition touches upon wars, their causes and solutions; human rights; and the fragility of peace.

Cathédrale Notre Dame

CATHEDRAL

(place Monseigneur Ginisty; ☉8.45am-7pm) Perched on a hillside, this Romanesque-meets-Gothic cathedral shelters a gilded baroque baldachin, restored after WWI damage. Much of the stained glass is interwar.

FREE Monument à la Victoire

VICTORY MONUMENT

(Carrer de la Portella 5) Steep steps lead up to this austere 1920s monument commemorating war victims and survivors. The crypt hides a book listing the soldiers who fought in the Battle of Verdun.

Porte Chaussée

CITY GATE

(rue Chaussée) This 14th-century city gate was later used as a prison.

Porte St-Paul

CITY GATE

(rue St-Paul) Built in 1877, this city gate is adorned with a marble plaque recalling the 'victorious peace' that inspired a 'cry of joy'.



Tours

The tourist office can book French-language **coach tours** (€26; ☉2-6pm Mon-Sat May-mid-Sep), which take in the Mémorial

de Verdun, Fort de Douaumont, Ossuaire de Douaumont and the Tranchée des Baïonnettes. Private English-speaking guides are available on request.

Sleeping & Eating

Brasseries and fast-food joints line up along riverside quai de Londres (a plaque on the wall near rue Beaurepaire explains the origin of the name).

Hôtel Montaubain

SMALL HOTEL €

(☎03 29 86 00 47; 4 rue de la Vieille Prison; d €35-45) It requires very little detective work to pin down this central hotel, which Mr Poirot (true to his name) runs with charm and an eye for detail. The spotless rooms are excellent value.

Auberge de Jeunesse

HOSTEL €

(☎03 29 86 28 28; www.fuaj.org, in French; place Monseigneur Ginisty; dm incl breakfast €17; @) What a view! Next to the cathedral, this well-kept hostel is gathered around a 16th-century cloister and affords far-reaching views of Verdun.

Hôtel Les Orchidées

FAMILY HOTEL €

(☎03 29 86 46 46; www.orchidees-hotel.com, in French; rue d'Etain; d/tr/q €56/75/85; ♿ ♿ ♿) Set in quiet gardens, this hotel has light, modern rooms (including spacious family ones), a swimming pool, tennis court and restaurant. It's 2km east of town on the D603.

Épices et Tout

MODERN FRENCH €€

(☎03 29 86 46 88; 35 rue des Gros Degrés; menus €14-23; ☺closed Wed dinner, Sun) Spice adds variety to the food at this atmospheric cellar bistro. Creative dishes like pork cheeks with caramel and peanuts, and cocoa-laced salmon terrine are well executed and served with panache.

Le Clapier

BISTRO €

(☎03 29 86 20 14; 34 rue des Gros Degrés; menus €14-22; ☺Tue-Sat) The chef's penchant for Provence's balmy climes shines through on the menu at this cosy bistro. Specialties like crumbly Brie tart and herb-infused leg of lamb are expertly paired with Meuse wines.

Pom'Samba

TRADITIONAL FRENCH €

(☎03 29 83 46 34; 7 av Garibaldi; menus €11; ☺Mon-Sat) The humble spud is king at this cheerful tiled restaurant, where potatoes are accompanied by everything from escargot to scallops.

Information

Pass Musées (adult/child €13.50/7.50) Pass covering admission to the Ossuaire de Douaumont, Fort de Douaumont and Mémorial de Verdun, and offering a 20% discount on other sights. Available from the tourist office.

Tourist office (☎03 29 84 55 55; www.tourisme-verdun.fr, in French; Pavillon Japiot, av du Général Mangin; ☎8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Guided tours and free maps of the Verdun Battlefields.

Getting There & Around

BICYCLE Mountain bikes are an excellent way to tour the Verdun battlefields; you can rent one at **Véloland** (Haudainville; half-day/full day/5 days €10/15/50), 5km south of the centre on the D964.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE You can park free in the car parks south of the tourist office on av du 8 Mai 1945 and rue des Tanneries.

TRAIN Verdun's poorly served train station, built by Eiffel in 1868, has direct services to Metz (€13, 1½ hours, three daily). Three buses a day go to the Gare Meuse TGV station (30 minutes), from where direct TGVs whisk you to Paris' Gare de l'Est (€40, 1¼ hours).

Verdun Battlefields

Much of the Battle of Verdun was fought 5km to 8km (as the crow flies) northeast of Verdun. Today, the forested area – still a jumble of trenches and artillery craters – can be reached by car on the D913 and D112; follow the signs to 'Douaumont', 'Vaux' or the 'Champ de Bataille 14-18'. Signposted paths lead to dozens of minor remnants of the war. Site interiors are closed in January.

Mémorial de Verdun

WAR MEMORIAL

(www.memorial-de-verdun.fr; adult/child €7/3.50; ☺9am-6pm, closed mid-Dec-Jan) The village of Fleury, wiped off the face of the earth in the course of being captured and recaptured 16 times, is now the site of this memorial. It tells the story of '300 days, 300,000 dead, 400,000 wounded', with insightful displays of war artefacts and personal items. Downstairs you'll find a re-creation of the battlefield as it looked on the day the guns finally fell silent.

In the grassy crater-pocked centre of what was once **Fleury**, a few hundred metres down the road from the memorial, signs among the low ruins indicate the village's former layout.

FREE Ossuaire de Douaumont

WAR MEMORIAL

(www.verdun-douaumont.com; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) Rising like a gigantic artillery shell above a sea of 15,000 crosses, this sombre, 137m-long ossuary, inaugurated in 1932, is one of France's most important WWI memorials. It contains the bones of about 130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers collected from the Verdun battlefields and buried together in 52 mass graves according to where they fell. Each engraved stone denotes a missing soldier, while a touching display of photographs show Verdun survivors – as they were in WWI and as they are today.

A ticket to the excellent, 20-minute **audiovisual presentation** (adult/child €4/3) on the battle also lets you climb the 46m-high **bell tower**.

Out front, the **French military cemetery** is flanked by memorials to Muslim and Jewish soldiers (to the east and west, respectively) who died fighting for France in WWI. The architecture of the former is evocative of a North African mosque.

Fort de Douaumont

FORT

(adult/child €3/1.50; ☎10am-6pm) Sitting high on a hill, about 2km northeast of the Douaumont Ossuary, this is the strongest of the 38 fortresses and bastions built along a 45km front to protect Verdun. When the Battle of Verdun began, 400m-long Douaumont – whose 3km network of cold, dripping galleries was built between 1885 and 1913 – had only a skeleton crew. By the fourth day it had been captured easily, a serious blow to French morale; four months later it was retaken by colonial troops from Morocco. It's free to take in the sweeping country views from the fort's crater-pocked roof.

Charles de Gaulle, then a young captain, was wounded and taken prisoner near here in 1916.

FREE Tranchée des Baïonnettes

WAR MEMORIAL

On 12 June 1916 two companies of the 137th Infantry Regiment of the French army were sheltered in their *tranchées* (trenches), *baïonnettes* (bayonets) fixed, waiting for a ferocious artillery bombardment to end. It never did – the incoming shells covered their positions with mud and debris, burying them alive. They weren't found until three years later, when someone spotted several hundred bayonet tips sticking out of the ground. Today the site where they

DON'T MISS

MORE SWEET THAN BITTER

Verdun's sweet claim to fame is as the *dragée* (sugared almond) capital of the world. In 1220 a local pharmacist dabbling with almonds, sugar and honey created the tooth-rotting delights that later graced the tables of royalty and nobility – Napoléon and Charles de Gaulle included. **Braquier** (☎03 29 84 30 00; www.dragees-braquier.com; 50 rue du Fort de Vaux; ☎9am-noon & 2-7pm) has been making Verdun's celebrated *dragées* since 1783 and offers free guided tours of its factory; see the website for times and details.

died is marked by a simple memorial that is always open. The tree-filled valley across the D913 is known as the **Ravin de la Mort** (Ravine of Death).

American Memorials

More than one million American troops participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive of late 1918, the last Western Front battle of WWI. The bloody fighting northwest of Verdun, in which more than 26,000 Americans died, convinced the Kaiser's government to cable US President Woodrow Wilson with a request for an armistice. The film *Sergeant York* (1941) is based on events that took place here. The website of the Meuse *département's* tourism board is www.tourisme-meuse.com (in French).

Apart from Romagne '14-'18, all of the sites mentioned below are managed by the **American Battle Monuments Commission** (www.abmc.gov) and are open from 9am to 5pm daily.

Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

WAR CEMETERY

The largest US military cemetery in Europe is this WWI ground, where 14,246 soldiers lie buried, in Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, 41km northwest of Verdun along the D38 and D123.

Romagne '14-'18

WAR MUSEUM

(☎03 29 85 10 14; www.romagne14-18.com; 2 rue de l'Andon; guided walks €10, donations welcome; ☎guided walks 9am-noon, museum noon-6pm, closed Wed) In the same village is this heart-wrenching museum, which displays Jean-

JEAN-PAUL DE VRIES: GUIDE & MUSEUM OWNER

Ever since I first handled a bayonet aged six, I've been fascinated by WWI. Over the past 35 years I've found some 60,000 artefacts in the surrounding countryside: combs, mess tins, grenades, you name it. That's what Romagne '14-'18 (p348) is all about: life stories, the human being behind the helmet. My museum is basically an old barn showing artefacts in their original state – rust, dirt and all.

My Fascination

Has always been the question: how could it ever happen? Just imagine living in the dirt for four years, far from your family, knowing you would probably die. It is beyond comprehension. I think when I find the answer, I'll stop searching.

Favourite Finds

The shoes that German soldiers, some of them amputees, made for the French kids from their old army boots. I like the things that show human resourcefulness, like coffee filters made from gasmasks and shells transformed into letter openers, ashtrays, even art. Then there is a mess tin with the inscription 'no good for shit' – who knows whether the soldier was referring to the food or the war in general!

Guided Walks

I run guided walks every morning to the trenches and the German lines, so people can picture how it must have been in battle and the cramped conditions of daily life. We nearly always find something, usually ammunition. Walking here alone can be dangerous because of the artillery craters and unexploded ammunition – one third of it is still left in the soil.

When to Visit

In May when the woods are fresh and Memorial Day is held at the Meuse-Argonne and Lorraine American cemeteries. Or in October when the region was liberated; on a cold, rainy autumn day you get a better sense of what happened here, what it must have been like.

Paul de Vries' fascinating private collection of war memorabilia. It's well worth joining Jean-Paul on one of his insightful morning walks of the battlefields.

Lorraine American Cemetery WAR CEMETERY
Verdun also had a significant military presence from the end of WWII until Charles de Gaulle pulled France out of NATO's integrated military command in 1966. Surrounded by woodland and set in landscaped grounds, this is the largest US WWII military cemetery in Europe. It's 45km east of Metz, just outside of St-Avold.

St-Mihiel American Cemetery WAR CEMETERY
In this WWI cemetery, the graves of 4153 American soldiers who died in the 1918 Battle of St-Mihiel radiate towards a central

sundial topped by a white American eagle. The cemetery is 40km southeast of Verdun on the outskirts of Thiaucourt-Regniéville.

Butte de Montsec WAR MEMORIAL
This 375m-high mound, site of a US monument with a bronze relief map, is surrounded by a round, neoclassical colonnade. It's a 15km drive southwest of St-Mihiel American Cemetery.

Butte de Montfaucon WAR MEMORIAL
Commemorating the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, this 336m-high mound is topped by a 58m-high Doric column crowned by a statue symbolising liberty. Located about 10km southeast of Romagne-sous-Montfaucon.

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